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A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY ANALYSIS OF WEB 2.0 TECHNOLOGY USE
IN EGYPT & CHINA, 2005-2010

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

By

MONICA D. MORALES
Bachelor of Arts, Baylor University, 2001

2015
Wright State University

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

April 30, 2015

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY
SUPERVISION BY Monica D. Morales ENTITLED *A Multi-Disciplinary Analysis
of Web 2.0 Technology Use in Egypt & China, 2005-2010* BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL
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ABSTRACT

Morales, Monica D. M.A. Department of Political Science, International and Comparative Politics Program, Wright State University, 2015. A Multi-Disciplinary Analysis of Web 2.0 Technology Use in Egypt & China, 2005-2010.

Taking a cue from scholars' suggestions to focus on the intersections of various fields of study, this research aims to find the commonalities among representative theories of democracy, mass media and social movements. Assessment of each reveals that all three areas of study encompass space for the interface of the media and the public. The confluence of these elements, when paired with Information and Communication-based technologies, yields what is introduced here as the Integrative Conceptual Model of Internet Analysis. Using this model gives way to a focus on Internet-mediated scenarios through a framework that evaluates the type of agent interaction, network formation, agents' dialogue and the incident's outcome. This is applied to three incidents in both the People's Republic of China and Egypt from 2005 to 2010. The interplay between media and citizens is explained through overarching messages, and interactions that may undergird the networks that mobilize collective action.

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ACRONYMS

AQSIQ – General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine

BBS – Bulletin Board Systems

CCP – Chinese Communist Party

ICT – Information and Communication-based Technologies

ICMIA – Integrative Conceptual Model of Internet Analysis

NDP – National Democratic Party

PRC – People’s Republic of China

WAAKS – We Are All Khaled Said

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My initial interest in Internet-based technologies came via my workplace in 2010, when the Department of Defense released Directive-Type Memorandum 09-026, *Responsible and Effective Use of Internet-based Capabilities*. In simple terms, DTM 09-026 lifted the restriction placed on authorized users of the United States government's unclassified computer network to access and use social media. Underscored in this policy memorandum is not only the importance of "responsible and effective use," but also emphasis on Internet-based technologies' pivotal role in DOD operations. This memo was issued just one month after then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's January 2010 speech about the value of Internet freedom around the globe.

Reaction to this newly released Internet policy within the headquarters of an Air Force major command, within which my office is located, was decidedly mixed. In general terms, one camp was unsettled by the DOD's seemingly rash disregard for operational security, digital safeguarding, and the potential for employees to stray from the mission once the digital floodgates opened. Another camp was appalled at the duration of the DOD's restriction and its effect of leaving the institution so far behind technologies' evolution. After all, the proliferation of mobile devices with Internet accessibility allowed personnel to circumnavigate the ban with little effort. Despite the new policy, the debate went on.

My decade-long background in print media and public affairs has nurtured my long-standing fascination with words, word choices and their perceived effects. The addition of the Internet to an already lengthy list of established communication tools only served to further fuel my interest. Combining the immediacy and reach of the Internet with well-crafted messages, signaled to me a new era in which words and even images, could exert greater influence than ever imagined. This notion was a powerful one, and thus guided my early research in 2010.

I am grateful to a great number of people who, by way of inquiry, proximity and friendship, played a role at various junctures throughout this experience. While not all-inclusive, this list includes my friend Genevieve, who provided me with an epic pep talk related to this research in 2013; my friend Chan, who without fail would ask how my research was developing; and, finally, my work colleagues Steve and Kathleen. Both would ask about and keep apprised of my progress, in addition to providing unfaltering encouragement even when my fatigue was readily apparent.

I've had the profound honor to have welcomed into my life throughout the years some of the most remarkable, talented educators. I admire each and every one of them, and credit them with revealing to me some unbeknownst aspect of their discipline. With the passing of time, it's been a most wonderfully unexpected surprise to regard some of them not only as mentors but also dear friends. A special gesture of gratitude goes out to Dr. Michael Bishop and Mrs. Mary Jo O'Rear. Dr. Bishop, my undergraduate advisor at Baylor University, has guided me in innumerable ways and offered his whole-hearted support when I first spoke of applying to grad school. Mrs. O'Rear, my history teacher at Richard King High School, recently shared with me invaluable insight into her own book

writing and research projects. These gems offered me great relief during what felt like the roller coaster ride of my own writing adventures.

The skills required for crafting a thesis, no matter how neatly outlined in handbooks, were not ones I readily possessed when I started this project. I owe abundant appreciation to my thesis advisor Dr. Laura Luehrmann for her expertise in guiding me through this research and writing process. I always departed from our morning meetings with a renewed sense of purpose and direction, along with an appreciation for the opportunity to work with someone so dedicated to her field. Many thanks also go out to Dr. Vaughn Shannon and Dr. Judith Ezekiel for sharing with me their knowledge as members of my thesis committee.

I owe my life-long pursuit of learning to my earliest two teachers and those whom I love most, my family. Affectionately known to others as Alfred and Sally, my parents have played an undeniably solid and singular role in my life. Since my childhood, they have unselfishly provided me with an abundance of opportunities. Mom and Dad have stood alongside me in my determination to forge a path beyond boundaries, cheering me during moments of triumph, comforting me through challenges, and always acknowledging with love and understanding my sometimes unique viewpoints, motivations and ambitions. I certainly wouldn't be the person I am today without their instilling in me the notion that determination and an open mind bring the capacity to expand one's world beyond all imagination.

I. INTRODUCTION

As the Arab Spring unfolded in late 2010, its citizen protests and uprisings highlighted the potential influence and roles information and communication-based technologies, or ICTs, could play in prompting regime change. In subsequent years, scholarly exploration has centered on the debate surrounding Internet technologies as tools of democratization or advanced communication. Instead of continuing this debate, this research aims to unify Web technologies' similarities in the context of three different fields of study: democracy, communication and social movements. The present body of academic discussion about the Internet and ICTs remains largely stove-piped, focusing on theoretical frameworks constrained to a single discipline and logical short-term findings. While this narrow exploration is somewhat expected given the Internet's relatively short history, it also overlooks long-term effects and over-arching theoretical implications. Broader analysis also bears the challenge of being driven by world events. Chief among the questions in my research is, "How do theoretical models of various fields of study converge to enhance understanding of Web 2.0 technologies' roles and functions as different agents interact?" The analysis drawn from exploring this research question also aims to determine how the United States may best approach crafting foreign policy as it relates to protecting Internet freedoms around the globe.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The proliferation of ICT use and its inherent ability to serve as a platform for public opinion had not previously gone unnoticed by governments, especially authoritarian regimes sensitive to scrutiny and criticism. Just months before the Arab Spring's beginning in late 2010, the Chinese Communist Party revised the Law on Guarding State Secrets to include more control of content that might eventually make its way online. The amended law brought heightened accountability to the country's Internet companies and telecommunications operators, essentially relying on them to censor at the source and in compliance with Chinese authority (Xu). One month later in May 2010, the Chinese government released its first white paper on the Internet. This document called for all Internet users in the country, even foreign organizations and individuals, to abide by specified laws and regulations in efforts to maintain Chinese "Internet sovereignty" (Xu). The release of these governmental provisions brought to a fore years of Chinese authorities' desire to further implement controls over citizens' Internet use. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had already experienced much discomfort in 2009 over the prospect of online chatter generated by the simultaneous anniversaries of Tiananmen Square, the Dalai Lama's exile and the banning of the Falun Gong (Deibert et al. 452), and it responded accordingly by blocking sites that might incite social unrest (Xu).

In December 2010, citizen unrest in Tunisia reached its crescendo and began sweeping across the Middle East region. This domino effect showcased a newer dimension of social organizing, prompting the question of *how* ICTs managed to gain a foothold in attempted political transitions. The answer to this question may ultimately contribute to the foundation of a strategic roadmap for U.S. foreign policy related to the

Internet and its accompanying technologies – another area under-represented in current academic research. Thus, this research may additionally provide policy makers with indicators capable of influencing institutional outcomes.

What transpired in Egypt in January 2011 underscores the significance of contributions to this type of research. Amid the voices of thousands of citizens gathered in Tahrir Square to protest against their government, Egyptian officials unilaterally decided to sever the nation's Internet connectivity just minutes after midnight on January 28. This act left the world with a sobering impression of the duality of technology, both in its capacity to embolden a nation's repressive will and empower citizens' rights. Just four days prior, the Web served a multitude of functions for Egyptian citizenry – hosting up-to-the-minute developments of unrest on journalists' blogs, serving as a venue for activists' plans on social media sites, and, more generally, acting as a reporting platform for sharing citizens' Tweets and videos with the world. As readily as citizens shared this information, access to it was seized within moments – almost the entire population of Egypt was without Internet connectivity, cell phone service and television signals.

Five days later, Internet access was restored and, within weeks, Egypt's authoritarian ruler stepped down. Witnessing this transition of power alongside the use of technology as an overt enabler to political discourse broke new ground and ushered forth much inquiry. At its most basic, it shed light on the ongoing struggle for human rights. Continued developments stemming from the Arab Spring, an ongoing series of anti-government demonstration and protest incited throughout the region, revealed Internet technologies' pivotal role in citizen organizing and the accompanying trend of a government's swift response to stop it. After Egypt's Internet shutdown, other regimes

followed suit: Syria's regime disconnected the Internet nationwide on June 3, 2011, as protestors called for the resignation of their president (Flock); the Libyan government shutdown the country's Internet on February 18, 2011, amid widespread protests (Huffington Post); and during this same time period, the Committee to Protect Journalists reported that Internet users in Bahrain and Yemen experienced slowed or weakened online connectivity.

Just as these events quickly reshaped the global political landscape, so too did users follow in lock-step to adapt Internet technologies to meet their own needs. This rapid progression yields fluid meanings, specifically in the case of software platforms that, like any innovation, "may be designed for specific purposes but often end up having wildly different social uses and effects than those intended by their creators" (Deibert 44).

Two key definitions are outlined here to reflect a distinction otherwise perceived as a seamless technological overlap. First, before a communication technology transitions to the online realm it first draws its power from the *Internet*, defined simply by Boas and Kalathil as a "set of protocols allowing computers to exchange information" (2). Thus the Internet, in its technological form, includes components of both hardware and software (McCarthy 91).

Second, ICTs, also known as *Web 2.0 technologies*, are any format by which political, social and economic discourse can flourish. In the digital age, this translates technologically into devices like "the mobile phone, and countless innovative applications for them, including 'new social media' such as Facebook and Twitter"

(Diamond 70). This subject garners most of its attention based on how people develop uses for these software applications, for example, to communicate news of civil unrest instantaneously with the world. As previously mentioned, the Internet merely enables these exchanges, albeit through a vehicle with diverse reach and immediacy. Hence the advent of Internet-enabled cell phones, short message services, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube has become the dominant form of interactivity today, where once message boards and e-mail served similar communication purposes during the Internet's infancy.

As stated, the bulk of the academic literature attempts to answer questions generally pertaining to what roles Web 2.0 technologies play in influencing state and society. While this body of work primarily represents the nexus of political science, scholars of communication and mass media, sociology and law have also weighed in to "fill the blanks" created by these technologies. The resulting literature proposes the following concentrations of study: Web 2.0 contributions to the public sphere; democratic models as they relate to Internet-democracy research; and, criticisms of the Internet as a catalyst of political influence and change.

EXPECTED FINDINGS AND FURTHER RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research focuses on the integration of several fields of study to build a working conceptual framework for case analysis. Thus, areas of integrated common ground largely still remain to be discovered. Initial expected findings resulting from this research include the following:

The intersection of various sub-fields of study – to include democratization, media and social movements – will reveal the types of interactivity that occur between mass media, citizen publics and the state as mediated via Web 2.0 technologies.

By extension, strong working relationships between state-run media organizations and independent citizen “reporters” have the potential to pose a greater threat to state institutions.

For purposes of this research, it is important to define here that *media* and *media organizations* refer to primarily state-owned media outlets that produce more traditional news products, to include newspapers, news magazines and their digital counterparts, crafted by professional journalists (Tang and Sampson 460). This distinction is critical given that citizen publics, or *netizens*, can create non-traditional online news “outlets” of their own wherever public commentary is posted. These venues may be independent of those that are state-run, yet bring with them an equal, if not greater, ability to generate news and attention. While these expected findings attempt to synthesize various theoretical frameworks, they also seek potentially to answer further questions such as:

1. Have Web 2.0 technologies influenced mass media reporting in authoritarian regimes?
2. Does the type of relationship fostered between mass media and citizen publics affect state behavior?
3. How do theoretical models of varying fields of study work together to enhance understanding of Web 2.0 technologies’ roles and functions?

4. More broadly, how should the United States respond – and what might it avoid – assuming that the nation is to craft foreign policy rooted in protecting freedom and universal human rights?

LITERATURE REVIEW

An ongoing examination of the literature surrounding the Internet and Web 2.0 technologies reveals a focus on three different core concepts. One segment of scholarship focuses on democratic models and their relation to Internet-democracy research. Similarly, another group of academics hones in on Web 2.0 technologies' development of the public sphere. At the opposite end of this spectrum are those scholars who deem the Internet a mere communication tool – one not necessarily capable of enacting political influence. The following pages highlight the most significant and relevant portions of these over-arching areas, while also reflecting a point of departure for much needed additional research.

THE INTERNET AND DEMOCRATIC MODELS

Questioning the democratizing influence of Web 2.0 technologies is foremost among the scholarly discussion stemming from the Internet's presence in contemporary society. Linking these technologies to applicable rhetorical practices, Dahlberg examines Internet-democracy theories and divides them into three broad categories – liberal individualist, communitarian and deliberative (158). According to him, these three electronic democracy camps are “distinguished by their respective understandings of democratic legitimacy” (Dahlberg 158). He describes each of the following models as follows:

For liberal individualism, a democratic model gains legitimacy when it provides for the expression of individual interests. For communitarianism, a democratic model is legitimated by enhancement of communal spirit and values. For deliberative democracy, a democratic model is legitimated by its facilitation of rational discourse in the public sphere (Dahlberg 158).

The latter two models, communitarian and deliberative, will be described in further detail.

Dahlberg's communitarian model demonstrates individual freedom through the shared value brought upon by the community (164). In this view, relationships are molded based on structures and social roles. According to Dahlberg, "Democratic dialogue serves the common life of the group, rather than the interests of a private individual" and "enables members of a community to discover their shared identity and purpose" (164). Interactive media fit perfectly into this category, especially where social activism and communitarian objectives are the concentrated goal. Benson explains this media role in much the same way, but calls it instead the elitist democratic model because the media retain the role of a watchdog, ensuring that "corruption or incompetence" is closely monitored for the benefit of public good (194). Building on his definition of democracy, Groshek equates this with "checks and balances" where the misuse of power by a branch of government can be reined in by other entities (120).

Dahlberg's final look at Internet-democratic research yields the deliberative model, a model that according to him has the capacity to build an added space where the exchange of ideas can take place (166). This differs from liberal individualism by demanding more democratic interaction via expanded networks, and from the communitarian model by helping participants move toward a common understanding and

beyond differences (Dahlberg 167). In relation to journalism and the media, Benson equates this to his version of the deliberative democratic model, and how the media work side by side with the public, creating an “environment of supportive reflection and providing aid in policy decisions” (194). Groshek similarly makes that case in outlining civil liberties within the definition of democracy. According to Groshek, civil liberties refer to “the guarantees of freedom citizens have in their lives and [their] acts of political participation” (117).

STRENGTHENING THE PUBLIC SPHERE

In an article written after outlining these three Internet-democratic models, Dahlberg analyzes the deliberative public sphere conception, often used by Internet researchers and commentators, to explain whether it can provide a strong foundation for democracy. Dahlberg then introduces to the deliberative model a new “agonistic” dimension that yields the radicalized public sphere conception.

How does this model relate to the Internet and its accompanying capabilities in order to build a strong model of democracy? According to Dahlberg and public sphere advocates, this view is

interested in the extent and quality of argumentation being facilitated online, particularly given claims that the Internet’s two-way, relatively low cost, semi-decentralized and global communications, combined with evolving interactive software and moderation techniques, offer the ideal basis (particularly when compared to the mass media) for rational deliberation (49).

Central to this modified conception is the role of “counter publics,” which further contribute to the dialogue already taking place in the public sphere (Dahlberg 60). This

transforms it into a fabric of many threads – including multiple publics, each trying to drive its own agenda.

Though on different terms, Zheng very similarly lays out this approach as part of the public sphere and public space conceptual framework for his book about technology's role in China. Rejecting the notion that either the state or society benefit from the interaction created by the Internet (Zheng 10), he contends that Web 2.0 use is not a “zero sum game” and instead serves as a venue for the expansion of each actor's political views. Within this broad area of study, Zheng finds that the Internet prompts a “recursive relationship” between the state and society and transforms the way interactions take place between them (Zheng 11). For China, in particular, that has translated into political liberalization in the aspects of “openness, transparency, and accountability,” which all ultimately benefit the state and society (Zheng 11).

Others choose a more macro-level approach that focuses on civil society; yet doing so still directly highlights an important aspect of the public sphere. Here, Deibert and Rohozinski introduce the notion of *global* civil society, which serves to recognize how the Internet sets the stage for “associations whose political activities take them beyond the confines of their own sovereign states” (124). This forum also includes three “spheres of agency:” civic networks, resistance networks and dark nets (Deibert and Rohozinski 124-125). The authors contend that the latter two, associated with radical activity and criminal networks, can harm civic networks' abilities to strengthen the public sphere by providing states with the justification to filter and deny access to certain cyber domains (Deibert and Rohozinski 125). Thus, delineating a civil society as one that is

“global” also creates the paradox of competing spheres whose ideologies do not necessarily represent the most peaceful, democratic aspects of a society.

CRITICISMS OF THE INTERNET AS POLITICAL INFLUENCER

Other scholars caution that before buying into the conception that ICTs carry with them democratizing qualities, the existence of the “fine lines” created by Internet use must be noted (Diamond 80). Although Diamond acknowledges Web 2.0’s expansion of the public sphere, he warns of how it is “tempting to think of the Internet as unprecedented in its potential for political progress” (71). Pointing to the historical evolution of communication technologies like the printing press and the telegraph, he argues that technology is simply a tool with the dual capacities to engender good and evil (Diamond 71). This duality signals technologies that can just as easily “be vehicles of information pluralism and rational debate,” as they can be “commandeered by totalitarian regimes for fanatical mobilization and total state control” (Diamond 71) – a message also echoed in former Secretary of State Clinton’s January 2010 speech on Internet freedoms. In effect, these technologies fail to offer innovations not already witnessed by the introduction of other communication technologies throughout history.

Diamond further advises that recognizing Internet technologies’ limitations is important in distinguishing the dual nature of this technology’s place in politics. On the one hand it can foster pluralism, advocacy and expansion of the public sphere. On the other, their use produces the noise of too many messages, intolerance and societal fragmentation. While the Internet brings rise to the voices of citizens the world over, Diamond argues that not all of them are necessarily “rational and civil” (80).

Though that critique focuses on technology as a tool, Hindman shifts focus to the potential conflict stemming instead from user characteristics. Despite highlighting the Internet's impact in relation to U.S. politics, Hindman offers arguments easily applicable to the international community. The exclusionary dimension of the "digital divide" presents the foremost cause of skepticism. Although citizens' access to the Internet has expanded during the last decade, certain segments of populations, typically those deemed "disadvantaged," will remain without access and connectivity (Hindman 9). Often included in this category are citizens of certain age groups, races and education levels (Hindman 9).

Hindman also suggests that the Internet's effect on politics will be minimal, simply providing another means to conduct "politics as usual" (9). Much like Diamond, Hindman argues that danger also lies in the Internet's capacity to dilute information and messages, in that audiences faced with millions of informational sites will cause "general-interest intermediaries [to] disappear, political polarization [to] accelerate, and public debate [to] coarsen" (Hindman 9).

A CALL FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Internet studies research within the discipline of media and communications varies widely by subject, and largely does not present a unified approach in its assessment of Web 2.0 technologies. Some scholars work to integrate the Internet into media effects models, while others examine the changing structure of journalism as seized by "citizen" reporters or activists. If there's any recurring message within this discipline's literature it comes in the form of calling for more research and cross-disciplinary examinations.

Foremost in this realm is the argument of della Porta, a sociologist and social movement theorist who notes that little research exists at the intersection of the fields of democracy, mass media and social movements. In her article entitled “Communication in Movement,” she urges the importance of analysis beyond the structuralist notions of democracy as “electoral accountability” (della Porta 802). Media studies reflect short-sightedness, too, in that virtually no exploration has been made between the “conditions and limits of media contribution to democracy” (della Porta 805). The advent of the Internet and Web technologies has given pause to this correlation (805), yet research remains fixated on technological, and not democratizing, aspects (della Porta 807). Instead, according to della Porta, attention within both these fields of study must shift toward the agents involved. Social movements research tends to lean more toward assessing agency, showcasing that social movements hold high esteem within democracies, “both by expanding the range of information and ideas, being more responsive to the excluded, and by impacting on the participants’ sense of the self” (della Porta 808). This results in more developed discussion of media environments and relationships between the media and publics, particularly as related to the backdrops against which social movements are born and develop (della Porta 810-811). In sum, della Porta calls for the close scrutiny of the overlapping commonalities between the three fields of study in order to draw further conclusions.

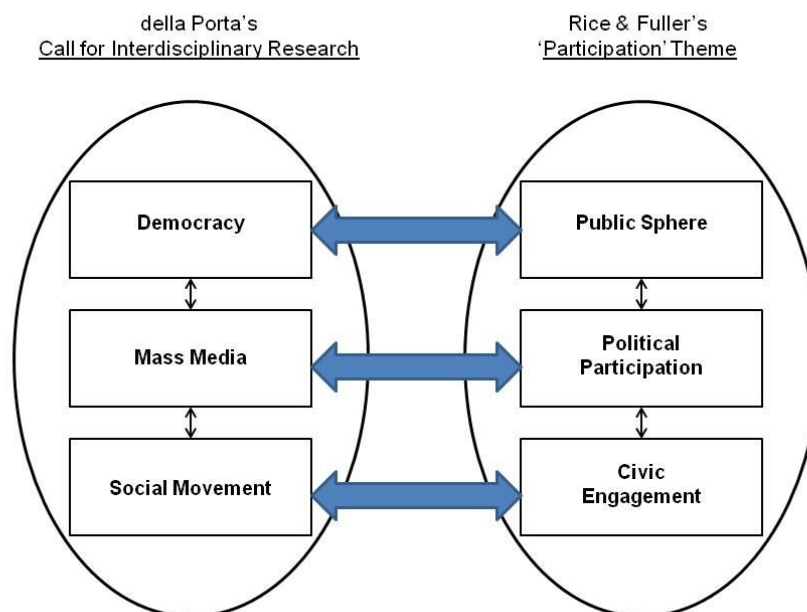
CONCEPTUAL MODEL & RESEARCH DESIGN

Cases in both Egypt and China will be examined using a conceptual model created to reveal the intersections of various fields of study. This framework follows della Porta’s call for focus on the “permeability of the borders” between the fields of

democracy, mass media and social movements (801). Each of the three fields of study is, in turn, represented by a singular dominant theory.

An added cue in shaping this conceptual model was derived from Rice and Fuller's content analysis of more than 300 scholarly articles about the Internet, communication and social sciences. Their assessment concluded that the literature contained six recurring global themes and, within those, 27 sub-themes (355). Rice and Fuller's findings show that the global theme of "participation" broadly encompasses the sub-themes of civic engagement, political participation, and the public sphere (358-359). This corresponds with della Porta's suggested areas of focus, as representative theories for civic engagement, political participation and the public sphere align precisely with representative theories for social movements, mass media and democracy. Diagram 1.1 outlines these matches.

Diagram 1.1 Patterns & Parallels in Internet Studies Research



Sources: "Communication in Movement," pg. 810-811 & *The Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies*, pgs. 358-359

At first glance, *mass media* and *political participation* may not illustrate as clear a connection as the other theoretical equivalents in this diagram. Worth noting here is that the field of mass media encompasses analysis of communication effects, which often focuses on political communication and, subsequently, political participation. Therein is the association between the two.

DEMOCRACY

In integrating representative theories from all three fields of study, the structural components will serve as units of analysis within each field. Thus, in the conceptual model created for this research proposal, democracy is represented by Habermas' theory of communicative action. His public sphere model serves as a "reference point with which theorists can gauge how far a particular system deviates from truly legitimate representative government" (Lewis 682). According to Habermas, the public sphere, comprised of publics, media and state institutions, functions at both a core and periphery level. While the core represents state bodies and the "capacity to act," it also acts as gatekeeper of public information in determining what filters through to influence "formal authority" (Lewis 682). Alternately, the periphery of publics seeks to exert influence over decision making through its "informal highly differentiated and cross-linked channels of communication" (Lewis 682). In this model, the media serves abundant collective political functions, but also focus on the "quality of participation, emphasizing an informed, reasoned and interactive public debate" (Lewis 683). This public sphere dialogue, according to Lewis, should include "rational-critical deliberation." Without this, fragmented and provincial personal opinions may never unite to form "collective

policy preferences” (Lewis 683). The use of Web 2.0 technologies may hold a valuable place in assessing these agents’ interactions.

MASS MEDIA

In further assembling a conceptual model for this research, mass media is represented by discourse analysis, the assessment of a “media message” as an independent discourse all its own (van Dijk 26). Discourse analysis as it relates to news production moves away from linguistic and semantic attributes and leans more toward the structure and meaning of discourse in a news product, for example, a newspaper article (van Dijk 20). Agency in news production reflects in the fact that reporting itself is the interchange of dialogue between journalists and society. The media does not craft news without sources, and, as such, it relies on another party’s discourse to interpret events as they have occurred. Even the objective facts in a news story are retold with a societal bias (van Dijk 28). Van Dijk further emphasizes the influence of agency by stressing what news production *is* and *is not*.

More specifically, it should be stressed that news production is not a direct representation (biased or not) of events, but rather some form of discourse processing. Reporters will seldom be direct witnesses to events; rather, their data are mostly other discourses, such as eyewitness reports, press conferences, press releases, statements of officials, interviews, documents, or news of other media and press agencies (van Dijk 28).

Operating in the background of these structures, van Dijk points out, are the beliefs and values held by journalists and publics alike. These seep through to dialogues, influencing the “production, reproduction, or understanding of the news ‘data’” (van Dijk 29). Much like the public sphere, the interaction of media and publics in the discourse analysis of news may also shape later repertoires of action.

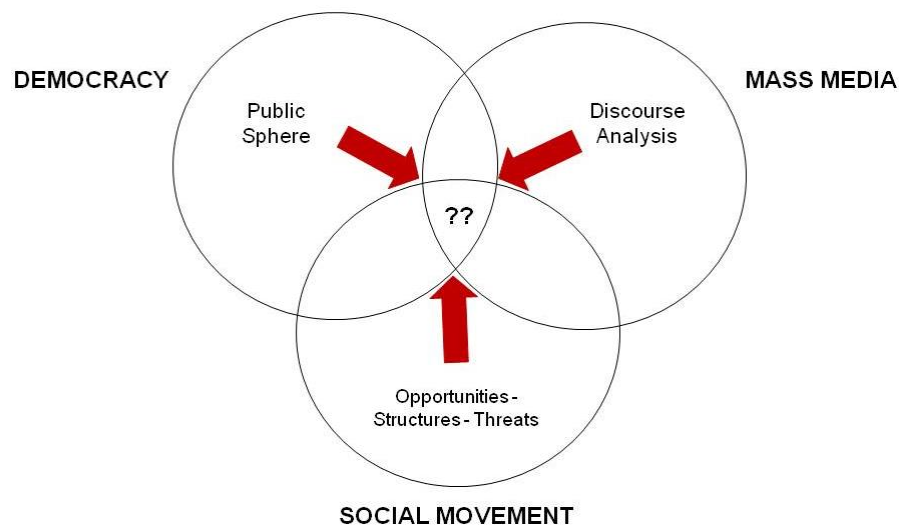
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Finally, this conceptual framework is rounded out by the addition of the three-part movement model to represent the field of social movements. Scholars generally agree upon the same three units of analysis, or components of a social movement, to gain an understanding of potential social change (McAdam et al. 2). This triad of focal points includes weaknesses in the political landscape that may translate into prospects for the aggrieved; the resources available to participants to organize a movement; and, finally, “the collective processes of interpretation, attribution, and social construction that mediate between opportunity and action” (McAdam et al. 2). To social movement theorists, these areas of concentration equate simply to *political opportunities*, *mobilizing structures* and *framing processes* (McAdam et al. 2).

The final component of the social movement approach includes consideration of the framing processes, or narrative generation, needed to spur collective action (McAdam et al. 4). Cooperatively this accounts for what Beck calls the “rhetorical and symbolic side of political contention” (1569). Also dubbed the “vocabulary of motives,” these unique languages affirm movement participation through the construction of justifications not only for purposes of defense but also for recruitment (Beaford et al. 2721). Snow contends that framing serves to construct “interpretive” schema that bring order and understanding to an existing reality (Tarrow 142). With opportunity and organization accounted for, participants in a movement require a form of commonality, or shared meaning, to further spur them into action. Framing processes round out this repertoire, bringing “collective attribution” and “social construction” to an otherwise inexplicable cause (McAdam et al. 5).

Early assessments of the specified democracy, mass media and social movement theories reflect that each field of study includes an arena whereby media and publics have a capacity to interact and deliberate. It is these relations and subsequent exchanges – should they be found to exist – that could well serve to influence citizen action as directed toward state institutions. The confluence of interactive and deliberative elements, when paired with Web 2.0 technologies, may reveal more commonalities not yet detected. If so, these added areas of overlap may re-direct case analysis and call for revisions to the outlined conceptual model. The sum of this research’s multi-study framework is illustrated in Diagram 1.2.

Diagram 1.2 Integrative Conceptual Model of Internet Analysis



Specific resources will be referenced to gather contextual data that will form the backdrop against which these cases are analyzed. The Population Reference Bureau, a collection of data compiling scores of population-related variables, will be consulted to gather demographic data about youth populations in each country. This youth demographic is targeted specifically for its greater likelihood to adopt and integrate Web

2.0 technologies into daily activities. Additionally, scores from multiple Freedom House reports will form the baseline for determining regime type, media freedom and Internet accessibility and control. For example, Freedom in the World, Freedom of the Press and Freedom on the Net provide scores for levels of state-owned media, levels of Internet freedom, and, more generally, the levels of a population's freedom. A number of digital resources will also be consulted, to include country-specific Internet monitoring sites like *China Digital Times* and *Al-Monitor*. The reporting on these sites provides both current and historical reference points by which to gauge a country's level of Internet freedom.

TIMEFRAME & CASES FOR EXAMINATION

The research proposed here will be qualitative, with a focus on the two countries of Egypt and China during the timeframe of 2005 to 2010. Note that application of this conceptual model to specified cases also intends to be largely exploratory in nature, and, while some expected findings have been outlined, it is anticipated that others will undoubtedly surface through examination. Selected cases will be evaluated to determine what George and Bennett call the "causal pathways [that] might operate in them" (234). Application of this conceptual model, therefore, will also rely upon induction to better fine-tune and solidify a working theory. Special attention will be paid to George and Bennett's caution to avoid restriction of case selection so as not to impede theory building (241).

The same reliance on induction will also hold for the outlining of relevant variables. The use of an integrative research model allows for potentially isolating what

George and Bennett refer to as “identifying clusters of characteristics that differentiate instances of the phenomenon” (238). Once more fully identified, these variables can be further examined for validity and then categorization. It’s this type of categorization that will eventually yield a more solid typological theory (George & Bennett 238).

The short lifespan of some social media platforms in general, paired with even shorter histories in specific world regions, aided in setting the timeframe. While interactivity on the Internet has existed in varying forms since the technology’s first public uses in the 1990s, the interactive software platforms that are most familiar today did not gain popularity until more than a decade later. For example, Facebook was opened to the general public in the United States in 2006, about four years after its first uses among U.S. universities and later high schools. Facebook did not reach the Middle East region until 2009. Similarly, YouTube, a video sharing site, debuted to the public in 2005, with micro-blogging website Twitter following one year later in 2006. Based on these origins, these technologies can only collectively be examined here for a very short span. China’s Web 2.0 history offers its own unique story in the region. In this country, most of these Western social media sites remain formally blocked or limited in use by the government’s direction, with equivalent Chinese social network sites like Sina Weibo and RenRen standing instead in their place. While these Chinese-based sites allow for ease of monitoring by government authorities, their existence does not preclude citizens from accessibility to Western social media. The public’s use of proxy servers and virtual private networks bypasses censors and provides an alternate path to Western sites where public opinion is more readily shared. Alternately, Internet users have adapted to

government censorship by using an “extensive series of puns — both visual and homophonous” to voice opinion on Chinese sites like Weibo (Xu).

The Chinese and Egyptian cases outlined below provide a snapshot of a more comprehensive sampling of Web 2.0 technology use within the aforementioned timeframe.

EGYPT

For focus on Egypt, this time period will examine the years immediately preceding the Arab Spring. The April 6 Youth, an anti-government group organized in 2007, was the first Egyptian oppositional organization to add Web 2.0 technologies Facebook and Twitter to a pre-existing line-up of digital resources. Under the leadership of Ahmed Maher, the April 6 Youth remained rooted in reviving the country’s labor movement with the added aim of “spreading the strikes and transforming them into [a] general prodemocracy movement.” This group borrows its name from its first general strike slated for April 6, 2008 (Lim 239). While this protest was met with military force, it did succeed in disabling day-to-day operations in parts of the country. Also worth noting is the group’s ability to garner global interest in the strikes through its use of Web 2.0 technologies (Lim 240). The full spectrum of April 6 Youth-led protests were by and large deemed productive by the group itself, and its attempt at online mobilization introduced to other activists new digital mobilizing resources (Lim 241). Howard and Hussain note that this movement embraced Web 2.0 technologies incrementally throughout the group’s lifespan and “not simply during the phase of street protests” (105).

Another relevant Egyptian case is the protest group named “We are all Khaled Said,” which initially emerged on Facebook in 2010. This organization formed with the objective of bringing public attention to the beating death of Khaled Said, a 28-year-old target of police brutality. The Egyptian police seized Said from an Internet café in Alexandria, and beat him in the street for alleged drug dealing. Internet chatter, however, revealed that police victimized Said for possession of video footage showing “police officers sharing the spoils of a drug bust” (Lim 241). As images of Said’s injuries circulated heavily online, he became the symbol of dissidence against the Mubarak regime (Lim 241). Bolstered by its representation of the collective “we,” the organization took to Facebook to organize protests in Cairo and Alexandria. Within two months, the group organized thousands of Egyptians into five silent protests. While anti-Mubarak movements already existed, this protest group became iconic in its ability to “put a face on” life under the dictator’s rule. Said’s death is also said to serve as the triggering event that incited “actual participation in collective action and social movements” (Lim 242.)

The examination of these cases proves particularly relevant given the 2011 overthrow of President Mubarak and the country’s resulting government transition. Assessing the years leading up to these events may reveal valuable data about patterns of Web 2.0 use. This time period also encompasses a span in which, by December 2010, the count of anti-government bloggers in Egypt who had been threatened, arrested or released reached about 31 (Ghannam 26).

CHINA

Within the same time period in China came the 2009 arrest of Deng Yujiao, a 21-year-old female employee of an entertainment establishment offering restaurant, salon and spa services in Hubei Province (MacKinnon 31). After a customer and local Communist Party official “demanded sex with her,” Deng stabbed the official, ultimately killing him, and also injured one of his friends. Police responded by arresting Deng and confining her to a mental hospital (French 42). The arrest and confinement sparked robust discussion online, which further ignited when investigative blogger Tu Fu photographed Deng strapped to a bed at the institution. When posted online, the images spurred public outrage and subsequent demands for Chinese officials to dismiss Deng’s murder charges. The charges were eventually downgraded, and Deng was released from hospital confinement. Similar to the elevation of Khaled Said by Egyptians as a personification of state repression, Deng Yujiao came to symbolize women’s vulnerability in the hands of the CCP. Women used the slogan, “Anyone could become a Deng Yujiao,” to relay this (French 42). Scholars speculate that when the state realized that “a conviction could spark riots, the authorities eventually dropped the murder charges” (MacKinnon 31).

A number of Chinese cases stem from the destruction of the Sichuan Province earthquake in 2008. Ai Weiwei, an artist and blogger, brought government corruption to a fore by aiding local families, bloggers and human rights attorneys in gathering and sharing information about children who perished in the collapsed schools (MacKinnon 248). Online discussion of corrupt local officials, who had permitted sub-standard construction of school buildings, propelled parents of deceased children to protest in want of answers. In a similar vein, teacher Liu Shaokun was detained and sentenced to labor in

June 2008 for posting pictures of destroyed buildings online (Deibert et al. 458). Overall, the Sichuan Province earthquake highlighted the notion that state-controlled media did not impede online reporting and debate from stepping in to fill that informational void (Lewis 685).

China, operating behind its Great Firewall, bears similarities to Egypt in that its people are under the governance of one-party rule and China's population is comprised of a sizable youth demographic. The country's government also offers a diverse history of Internet censorship and controlled access that provides measured examples to assess. Among these are incidents surrounding the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the arrest and imprisonment of Internet activists.

These cases from both Egypt and China will be examined as a means to better develop expected findings and draw further inferences about the relationships between different involved publics. Special attention has been paid here to refer to "findings" versus hypotheses. This is due primarily to the above-described need to first identify variables long before constructing hypotheses for a given theory. The model of a "most similar" research design best accommodates this research not only for commonalities between the two countries' authoritarian regimes, but also for their similarities in state-run media outlets and established histories of Internet censorship. A research design structured around similar cases will aid in determining different variables' potential inclusion or exclusion, depending on specified outcome. These inferences may yield significant results, especially given that the research spans multiple fields of study that, as yet, lack a unified approach in both structure and breadth. Finally, this type of research

design offers the best venue by which to explore policy recommendations, a previously mentioned ancillary objective of conducting this research

II. CHINA

The *Integrative Conceptual Model of Internet Analysis* (ICMIA) included in Chapter 1 further reveals more pointed areas of overlap among the three representative theoretical models and their accompanying units of analysis. An apparent commonality to both *democratization* and *mass media* are the agents of *publics* operating within the public sphere and *society* operating within discourse analysis. Another common denominator is drawn from the agent of *media* that operates both within the public sphere and discourse analysis theories. Worth noting here is that the additional agent of the *state* within the public sphere theory, in some respects, operates in conjunction with the *media*. Both countries examined in this research, for example, govern their countries' respective media organizations. The collaborative nature between the entities of *media* and *state* does not, however, explain the independent actions taken by other state-run organizations. If these independent actions should become crucial to an incident's understanding, they will be noted well beyond the aforementioned *media-state* partnership.

Finally, and perhaps less apparent, is the *media-public* interaction that occurs within social movement theory. More specifically, this interaction takes place within the *structures* component of the three-part social movement theory. It's here that the Internet (Tarrow 121) can act to help "constitute *organizational structures* joining diverse and often widely dispersed activists" (Tarrow 137). The media's online reporting can act to

forge associations in ways that historically were “transposed into pamphlet wars, ribald songs and ... cartoons and prints,” showcasing the struggles that arise between the common man and his opponents (Tarrow 62). The interactions between these entities, as mediated by the Internet, may well serve as the basis for collective action that leads to social movement.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR CASE ANALYSIS

Each Internet-related incident included in forthcoming chapters will include three sections outlining the ICMIA’s overlap of *public-media* interactions. The first section sets the stage, explaining the scenario and describing generally these agents’ interactions as they develop; the second section reflects how these interactions form the basis of the media’s message; and, finally, the third section details how *public-media* interactions serve to form the structures – networks and organizations – in potential collective action.

INDIVIDUAL VS. LOCAL OFFICIALS: DENG YUJIAO, 2009

On May 10, 2009, Deng Yujiao, a 21-year-old female employee of an entertainment establishment in Hubei Province, was arrested by police and charged on suspicion of murder and the use of “excessive force” (MacKinnon 31; Browne n.p.). A local CCP official and patron of the hotel, requested from Deng “special service” – a euphemism for sex. After her refusal, the official became physical and Deng stabbed him, ultimately killing him and injuring one of his friends (Browne n.p.). Deng called the police to report the crime, considering her attack self-defense against an attempted rape (“Victim of Rape Attempt” 32). Despite her victimization, police arrested Deng for stabbing the official (“Stab at Reform” 40).

Not long after, police confined Deng to a mental hospital (French 42). Since police had found anti-depressants in Deng's bag at the time of her arrest, the police reported that she suffered from "mental instability" ("Stab at Reform" 40). Eighteen days later on May 28, police released Deng from the mental institution on bail and ordered her to home confinement until her trial (Chao A7). Two days later the police finished its investigation of the case and transferred it to the provincial court ("Victim of Rape Attempt" 33). On June 2, Deng's surviving attacker, also a CCP official, was fired from his government post (Browne n.p.), but no charges were brought against him ("Stab at Reform" 40). Nearly two weeks later, and a little more than a month after her initial arrest, the Chinese court dismissed Deng's murder charges but upheld the charge of excessive force ("Stab at Reform" 40).

FORMATION OF THE MEDIA MESSAGE

Media first reported on the Deng case just days after her arrest (Huang 734), with three local newspapers publishing the stories in print and posting those same stories online (Tang and Sampson 464). Netizens immediately took to the 'comment' section of the stories where, according to Tang and Sampson, "The expressed opinion was almost universally one-sided and the comment – 'The official's death is well deserved. We strongly request the release of the heroine who got rid of an evil for the people' – was widely supported" (464). Huang echoes this observation, stating that most all online comments supported Deng's being "hailed as a national heroine, even as a sword master, who resisted lecherous officials and maintained the traditional virtue of women" (732).

A number of netizens expanded the reach of their reactions by "cross-posting" the same comments to Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) (Tang and Sampson 464). BBS are

known to be safer havens to Chinese netizens, given that they generally offer more freedom to debate issues and less censorship from authorities (Chao A7). Amid building public opinion, local officials in Badong County, site of the attack and arrest, posted a headline to an agency website “inviting anyone concerned with the case to call the county’s news and information center” (Chao and Zhang A7). Netizens, however, continued posting online comments in support of Deng. One netizen going by the handle of ‘Watching Over China’ wrote on a *People’s Daily* Web forum that the attack date “will forever be remembered as the day on which a [girl] bravely defended herself and fought against the corrupt official when her life was threatened.” Another, going by the name ‘Guo Chunfu,’ posted that Deng “used her own acts to show that even the underprivileged can have a dignified life” (Chao and Zhang A7). This outpouring of support in the form of online commentary garnered attention all its own, and prompted the Chinese media to examine the case with greater scrutiny than initially reported (Tang and Sampson 464).

While Deng’s arrest sparked robust discussion online, it further ignited when investigative blogger Tu Fu photographed Deng strapped to a bed, crying at the mental institution (French 42). Tu Fu, whose real name is Wu Gan, funded the trip to the Badong facility through requests he posted on the Kaidi BBS asking netizens to help him raise money for his travels there. The money, he wrote online, would also fund his travel to visit Deng’s family and offer legal services. Wu’s photo and video of Deng’s confinement served to uphold his stated commitment to blog as further developments unfolded (Tang and Sampson 465). Once released, this video reached mass audiences when it was televised on a Chinese television station. The release of these images directly

increased online commentary, and subsequently the media took notice – it increased its own reporting, this time focused on the online commentary (Huang 734). The flood of commentary propelled journalists to focus more closely on their investigation of the case and netizens reciprocated by further “scrutiniz[ing], question[ing] and discuss[ing] every report in detail” (Tang and Sampson 465).

This steady engagement between media reporting and netizen reporting put public opinion in the spotlight, thus positioning netizens’ agenda to guide the state media’s reporting (Tang and Sampson 465). As this tit-for-tat unfolded online, the Chinese Communist Party took notice that it was losing grip on its span of control both with regard to the Internet and professional journalists. On May 22, the CCP’s State Council Information Office based in Beijing issued an instruction to media to ease its emphasis on the reporting of the Deng case (Tang and Sampson 466), and specifically called for websites to delete any reporting considered “harmful information that viciously attacks the CCP and the government, attacks the Justice system, or promotes democracy and human rights” (“Victim of Rape Attempt” 33). The instruction’s effects produced demonstrative results a mere four days later: Wu’s blog was shut down by government censors; in Yesanguan, the town where the attack occurred, television and Internet were shut down (Wines 6); journalists dispatched to Badong County to continue their reporting met with local officials who ordered their withdrawal (Tang and Sampson 466) and some journalists were beaten when they did not comply; and, with the screening of outsiders to Badong, also came the halt of public transportation into the province (Wines 6).

After the verdict was announced on June 16, netizens continued their hold on the Internet as a forum for public opinion. A netizen from Guangdong posted to popular

Chinese web forum Tianya.com that the verdict was a “significant victory of Chinese Internet users and Chinese democracy” (Chao A7). Another wrote that “No matter what, this [was] partly the victory of public opinion” (McCabe A11). According to a June 17 *New York Times* article, netizens posted more than 4 million comments about the Deng case (Wines 6). State-run China Central Television conducted an online survey from May 16 to June 6, 2009, asking what respondents thought would be the appropriate punishment for Deng. Of 117, 001 responses, 92.89 percent of the respondents thought it fit the legal definition of “self-defense” and that Deng should not be convicted of any crime; 6.31 percent of the respondents thought it was excessive defense and that Deng should not be convicted of intentional homicide; and, only 0.80 percent of respondents thought it was hard to tell (Huang 734).

CONSTRUCTION OF NETWORKS & ORGANIZATIONS

Legal scholar Xuanyu Huang notes that as online comments proliferated in the Deng case, it simultaneously allowed for citizens to join in “associations and formations” that might not otherwise have occurred (728). This is due in large part to the Chinese government’s strict restrictions regarding offline organizing (Huang 728). Fueled here by inequities of social class (Huang 725), but also by inequalities of power and gender (Huang 735), netizens largely united to highlight perceptions of “pervasive government corruption” (Huang 725). By extension, this encouraged what Tang and Sampson refer to as *internet incidents*, or the collective activity spontaneously developed among netizens (457). Yu’s statistics citing mass protest in China mirror this, reflecting that in slightly more than 10 years’ time from 1993 to 2005, mass protests have increased from 8,700 to 87,000 (qtd. in Huang 730).

News reports indicate that two small protests were organized between the date that Deng's case was first reported by media and the date her court verdict was announced – roughly a span of 36 days (“Stab at Reform” 40). One protest took place near the Beijing West Railway Station around May 20 (Chao and Zhang A7). The gathering there of a women's rights group brought together five women who used performance art to make a statement about the Deng case (“Stab at Reform” 40). One of the protestors in attendance said the demonstration aimed to bring women's rights to a fore (Chao and Zhang A7). Another participant wrapped her body in white cloth, almost mummy-like so that her arms and legs appeared restrained. She similarly covered her face in the same cloth, so that her mouth was concealed and only her eyes and forehead shown (“Stab at Reform” 40). She lay down on the floor alongside a sheet of paper that read, “Anyone may become Deng Yujiao” (Chao and Zhang A7).

MULTIPLE INDIVIDUALS VS. STATE BUSINESS: SANLU MILK SCANDAL, 2008

In March 2008, Chinese dairy company Sanlu heard chatter from consumers that its milk powder was producing serious side effects in the infants drinking it (Chao, Zhang and Champion A8). Despite this, just two months later the CCP's food quality agency rated China's dairy companies “among the safest producers in China's food industry” (Yardley et al. 1). The Dairy Association of China also favorably reported that Sanlu had “topped the country's dairy makers in infant formula sales for 15 years in a row” (Hu 24). Sanlu's profitable milk powder resulted primarily from its being marketed as the least expensive of milk powder brands sold in China (Hu 24). By May, a 5-month-old baby in Gansu Province died after drinking the powdered formula (Toy 14).

The following month, Sanlu was informed that another infant was hospitalized after drinking the company's milk powder (Chao, Zhang, and Champion A8), and another baby in Gansu Province died in July, again after drinking Sanlu's powdered formula (Toy 14). In August – the same month as the opening ceremonies for the 2008 Beijing Olympic summer games – melamine was pinpointed as being the contaminant in Sanlu's formula (Chao, Zhang, and Champion A8). The addition of melamine to milk powder boosts the product's protein level when tested, thereby allowing it to meet quality standards for sale to consumers. When ingested, melamine, a chemical commonly found in plastics, fertilizers and cleaning products, can cause stones to form in the kidneys and urinary tracts of infants and children (Hu 24). A daily newspaper broke the story in September, publishing an article about Sanlu's role in the milk contamination (Veil and Yang 936).

Although Sanlu initially maintained its innocence and claimed itself a victim by sabotage (Veil and Yang 936-937), its CEO Tian Huawen admitted to contamination of its milk products and awareness of it for a month prior to any public reports surfacing (Hu 24). Around September 15, Sanlu issued a public apology, recalling nearly 700 tons of the milk powder. News outlets reported the death of a third infant in early September, along with the two others that had taken place between four and five months prior to the milk scandal breaking (Toy 14). By the next day, police had questioned 78 people and arrested four allegedly connected to lacing Sanlu products with melamine.

Simultaneously, the Chinese State Council created and launched an investigative team to better regulate food safety and food quality. The Council also issued a statement on its website asking that people stop drinking the milk powder (Hu 24). A fourth baby

died in Xinjiang Province on September 18, and the state continued its manhunt for the perpetrators. Police formally arrested 18 individuals and accused six of selling melamine to milk suppliers. At final count, Sanlu's tainted milk powder produced staggering effects: From September to December 2008, the Chinese Ministry of Health reported the hospitalization of about 51,900 babies; 294,000 infants with urinary tract stones; more than 1,000 babies confirmed to have kidney stones; and, six infant deaths (Rodriquez and Yao 110). By early January 2009, the state had arrested 60 people in connection with the line of tainted milk, and the trials of four Sanlu executives had just recently began. On January 21 and 22, Hebei provincial courts sentenced 21 people related to contaminated milk products with punishments ranging from death sentences to jail terms. Included in these sentences were punishments for Sanlu executives and milk producers and traders ("Timeline: China Milk Scandal" n.p.).

FORMATION OF THE MEDIA MESSAGE

The Xinhua News Agency reported on September 9, 2008, that 14 babies in Gansu Province were hospitalized with kidney stones (Hu 24). Just two days later, the *Oriental Morning Post* published the story that broke the news of Sanlu's involvement with the tainted milk (Veil and Yang 936). This story revealed that the dairy company had known about the contamination of its milk powder, but continued to sell the melamine-laced product. From the first moment the Chinese media reported on Sanlu's tainted milk supply, it took on the role of risk reporting. Especially in crisis situations, the media, perhaps inadvertently, retains the singular role of disseminating reliable information to a public that looks to it to "cope with the threat" and decide how best to act (Rodriquez and Yao 110). Through the lens of netizens, however, this media role was

met with both suspicion and criticism. This is due partly to cultural constraints and the Chinese media's inherent role to act as a mouthpiece of the state, strictly avoid criticism of the CCP, and serve as a venue for the party's "prevailing ideology" (Rodriquez and Yao 110).

Veil and Yang propose that, although the state attempted to thwart media transparency throughout the Sanlu milk scandal, netizens voicing their opinions online actually built greater transparency – even in the face of some calculated business dealings aiming for the contrary (937). Despite a media landscape influenced by journalists' acceptance of bribes and publications' coverage swayed by advertising dollars (Veil and Yang 935), netizens' "tremendous public reaction" contributed to driving Sanlu's executive decisions and, thus, once again media coverage (Veil and Yang 937).

Within hours of the *Post* story going online and getting cross-posted, netizen reaction surged in response to news of the contaminated milk (Veil and Yang 936-937). On September 12, Sanlu CEO Tian stated, "This issue is caused by some illegal activities in the purchase process of original milk. Sanlu is innocent in the entire case, and is also a victim" (Veil and Yang 937). Just three days later, Sanlu issued a formal statement of apology, in which the company not only took some accountability for the tainted milk, but also issued a recall of milk powder. It also offered to compensate families for the medical expenses incurred by their sick infants (Veil and Yang 937).

An examination of 27 stories by *The Economic Daily*, a paper published by the State Council of the Central Propaganda Department, shows that this newspaper initially focused its reporting on the Chinese government's ability to rebound from the crisis in an

attempt to quell public reaction (Rodriquez and Yao 112). In line with the statements made by Sanlu executives, the *Daily's* reporting transitioned to reflect the placement of blame on milk suppliers and producers versus that of Sanlu itself. The newspaper's media message then shifted to one of calling for "stronger business ethics" (Rodriquez and Yao 113). This undoubtedly corresponded with the State Council's establishment of an investigative team led by the Ministry of Health (Hu 24). As part of this initiative the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) commenced an inspection of China's 109 formula makers – it later found that 22 of them produced melamine-laced products (Hu 24).

As in the case of Deng Yujiao, netizens created their own over-arching and opposing media message online. Their message, however, not only responded to the actions outlined above, but also pointed to a clear lapse between the first infant deaths – long before first news of them – and Sanlu's ownership of the problem. An example highlighting this is that of blogger Fu Jianfeng, who also happened to be the editor at the independent weekly publication *Southern Weekend* (Yardley et al. 1). Two months before news first broke about the tainted milk, reporters at *Weekend* had discovered the issue and were ready to go to print, but the government forbade it due to the upcoming Olympic opening ceremonies. Instead, Fu took to his blog to convey the discovery. In this forum, Fu wrote that Sanlu "applied pressure to block reporting and used its political connections to prevent some other newspapers from publishing articles about the problem." Fu's blog post was eventually removed from the Internet as part of the government's edict to get permission from the CCP before publishing articles about food safety and "other politically delicate subjects" (Yardley et al. 1).

Similarly, on June 30 – practically a full two months prior to the discovery of the tainted milk – a mother with a sick infant in Hunan Province wrote a letter to the AQSIQ pleading for aid, and for Sanlu to issue a recall, report on the issue and grant medical compensation for children’s treatment (Yardley et al. 1). The letter got posted to the AQSIQ’s website, but, like Fu’s blog post, it was removed in the days leading up to the revelation that Sanlu played a role in manufacturing and distributing bad milk (Yardley et al. 1). On the same September day that Sanlu admitted to its role in the milk scandal, a netizen wrote of the mother’s letter and how it had once been posted to the AQSIQ’s website but had since been removed (“Timeline” 41).

Another instance of a netizen’s early discovery of the issue occurred in May, again months before Sanlu’s admission of accountability, when Wang Yuanping posted an article to Tianya about his 7-year-old daughter’s ailments after drinking Sanlu milk powder (Yardley et al. 1; “Chinese Netizens Question” n.p.). Initially, the article got buried. When it re-emerged it received more than 90,000 comments saying that his daughter’s situation could have been avoided had Sanlu attended to the complaint (“Chinese Netizens Question” n.p.). Echoing this sentiment, a user named ‘myy8206’ posted the following comment on the forum xici.net, “Where are the concerned parties that are supposed to inspect the quality? They should be taken out and shot!” (Magnier A4).

CONSTRUCTION OF NETWORKS & ORGANIZATIONS

One of the most prominent Internet activists related to the tainted Sanlu milk also played a pivotal hand in the unification and organization of affected families. In late

September 2008 Zhao Lianhai, a former employee of China's Food Quality and Safety Authority and a former journalist, created a website seeking help after his 3-year-old son was diagnosed with kidney stones ("Father of 'Toxic Milk' Child" n.p.; Jacobs A12; Cha A1). Within days, more than 4,000 families with a child either hurt or killed by the poisoned milk joined the site, and the Melamine Victims' Parents Alliance was born. What started by Zhao as a site for discussing children's medical care transformed into a virtual location for questioning government accountability and demanding compensation (Cha A1).

Through connections forged with families through the website, Zhao compiled a database of information about the affected children and posted it online. Zhao made himself accessible to other parents by way of his instant-messaging program, which he kept open each day for 24 hours in order to document parents' reports of the melamine's effects on their children (Chao and Dean 8). The network created through the site allowed for Zhao and parents to establish a presence at key points in the investigation into Sanlu's role in the poisoned milk. Whether at the sentencing of company officials or at the auction of assets during the company's bankruptcy, the group united to hold up signs that read, "Killers should pay with their own lives," and, "We want to participate in the prosecution" (Cha A1). The group, which also eventually went by the name Kidney Stone Babies, lobbied against the central government's Ministry of Health to make strides toward a "national compensation plan that allocated cash to victims based on age and severity of illness" (Cha A1).

Almost immediately after Zhao's establishing the site, the government tried to shut it down (Cha A1). To maintain the site's presence, Zhao outran government censors

by switching servers, using filter circumnavigation tools and continuously changing the Web address (Cha A1; Chao and Dean 8). This surveillance culminated into Zhao's November 2009 detention, and his being charged with "creating a disturbance" in March 2010. Later that same year, the Chinese courts sentenced Zhao to two-and-a-half years in jail, a year of which he had already served during his arrest and detention ("Father of 'Toxic Milk' Child" n.p.).

MULTIPLE INDIVIDUALS VS. LOCAL & STATE OFFICIALS:

COLLAPSED SCHOOLS OF THE SICHUAN EARTHQUAKE, 2008

On May 12, 2008, at 2:28 p.m., a 7.9 magnitude earthquake struck the southwestern province of Sichuan. A province described as largely poor, heavily populated and mountainous, Sichuan emerged from the quake with swaths of destruction and the government reporting an initial death toll of more than 12,000, with 26,000 injured and another 9,400 buried in debris (Hessler 108; Garnaut and McDonald 1; Chao and Leow 1). Among the first post-quake observations was the marked contrast in infrastructure's response to the quake: buildings in poorer rural areas experienced far more damage than those located in more affluent cities. Further, a more pointed trend emerged when early reports of nine schools collapsing during the quake morphed into an online BBS reporting more than 8,300 schools and dorms destroyed throughout the quake zone (Chao and Leow 1; Spencer and Jin A6).

Already familiar with disaster response after a 1976 earthquake in Tangshan, the Chinese government this time spurred itself into immediate action and dispatched Premier Wen Jiabao to the Sichuan capital of Chengdu within two hours of the quake

(Fowler and Dean 9). In the coming days Wen continued touring the quake zone, at one point pausing to shout words of encouragement into the rubble for any trapped survivors to hear (Fowler and Dean 9; Garnaut and McDonald 1). Chinese media followed the premier's every move, projecting a public image that conveyed a "strong leader in touch with the needs of common people" (Fowler and Dean 9).

Three days after the quake, the central government formally accepted offers of help from foreign rescue teams – another departure from Beijing's past earthquake disaster response which wholly rejected aid (Garnaut and McDonald 1; Goodspeed A1). Murmurs about the school children killed in collapsing schools continued, with the chatter mounting into allegations of government corruption related to lax building codes and cheap construction. Initially, parents of the deceased school children were not impeded from speaking out about these suspicions (Gee A17). This reinforced the central government's apparent move toward greater transparency. A May 16 online question-and-answer forum between the CCP and citizens with queries about the collapsed schools seemed to signal even further openness (Anna 1). However, this accessibility diminished as questions remained about the collapsed schools, and gradually the government took actions aimed at maintaining parents' silence. Fences cropped up around school grounds; bulldozers leveled the remaining rubble; and, the Propaganda Ministry issued a directive asking journalists to file stories that "stress unity, stability and positive publicity" (Gee A17; Goodspeed A1). As the August date for the opening ceremonies of the Beijing Olympics hedged in closer, reports surfaced in mid-July of the government buying off parents in exchange for their silence. Local and central government officials offered some

parents between \$8,500 to \$9,000 for their promise to not “participate in efforts that [would] affect overall rebuilding efforts” (Fairclough A7; Gee A17).

By the end of May, government officials attempted to pre-empt more damning allegations by publicly hinting at the potential for corruption to have played a hand in the collapse of schools. An Education Ministry spokesman stated during a May 27 press conference, “We can’t rule out the possibility that someone did bad things in the process of construction.” Local officials in towns throughout the quake zone followed suit by pledging to launch investigations into the causes behind the faulty schools (Oster A15). Just two days later, the vice inspector of the Sichuan Provincial Educational Department withdrew himself from participation in the Olympic torch rally after becoming the “first official to publicly acknowledge that corruption might have contributed to the collapses” (Blanchard n.p.) In a statement to Xinhua, Lin Qiang also referenced allowing for “loopholes for corruption” that ultimately resulted in Beichuan schools crumbling. In another May 29 news conference, the deputy head of the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine said the department was investigating the school collapses, and would level appropriately severe punishments if “substandard materials” were discovered (Blanchard n.p.). Not long after the release of these officials’ statements, a Sichuan official resigned citing the burden he felt by his own role in the high student death toll (Jacobs, “China Sentences Activist” 4).

By early June 2008, almost one month after the quake, the death toll reached a total of 70,000 (“Outrage Replaces Grief” n.p.). Discrepancies remained in the reported number of school children’s deaths. China’s state media reported in late May the deaths of more than 6,500 students. Meanwhile, citizens combined media and online statistics to

arrive at an estimate of at least 10,000 student deaths (Blanchard n.p.). The *Washington Post* reported that by mid-July more than 9,000 school children had perished in collapsed buildings (Drew B6).

The CCP released a report by year's end acknowledging that schools across the country had been ill-constructed and that "20 percent of primary schools in one southwestern province may be unsafe" ("Sichuan Earthquake" n.p.). As the one-year anniversary of the quake approached, Sichuan education department authorities poised themselves to "head off public criticism" by holding a press conference announcing the state's official count of student deaths (Jacobs and Wong n.p.; Kuhn n.p.). During this May 7, 2009, briefing, spokesman Tu Wentao revealed that 5,335 children were dead or missing and that 546 were left disabled. Tu emphasized that the numbers were accurate and attained through "legal methods," despite bearing no further identifying data like names, ages and places of death. These official statistics, so disparate from initial estimates, aroused citizens' suspicions further (Jacobs and Wong n.p.). Although parents' continued to press the issue of government accountability, few avenues existed for families to pursue recourse. Local governments' initial promises to investigate the causes behind the faulty schools yielded no responsible parties and, subsequently, no punishments. Parents attempting to file cases in provincial courts met with authorities who could not "accept cases that they do not approve in advance," and further attempts to elevate concerns to the central government were similarly met with being "blocked, detained and harassed" (Kuhn n.p.).

FORMATION OF THE MEDIA MESSAGE

The earthquake's geographic reach and effects on the province's landscape allowed for citizens to unify online almost instantaneously by reporting the event both during and after the quake hit. Citizens' amateur videos were posted to websites immediately after the quake, creating a reference by which to gauge the disaster's geography and severity. The first video to appear online was that taken by a Sichuan University student. This blurry amateur footage contained imagery of a shaking building, the view of a courtyard below filling with evacuating people and falling debris. These images were accompanied by the student's narration giving the time and location and urging citizens to "go online" and "tell others" about the quake (Wang 264). Another video of the disaster taken by a blogger named 'Awflasher' documented his or her evacuation from the 15th floor of an office building. After posting this imagery to YouTube, it became the video-sharing site's featured video just one day later (Wang 264). Simultaneously, online chatrooms saw a surge in users "commenting, criticizing and asking for more information" about the earthquake (Goodspeed A1). According to Sina.com, between May 12 and May 19, "4,830 pieces of visual news shot by personal web-camera were transmitted to China's four leading news websites and 6,113 pieces to China's four dominant web portals" (Wang 264).

Traditional media outlets also broke news of the quake, albeit with greater delay than citizen reporters had. Nearly 20 minutes after the disaster struck, the Xinhua News Agency reported on the quake (Wang 263). The Chinese propaganda department issued a media directive just another 10 minutes later. This initial directive instructed reporters to avoid the quake site, and use only reports provided by state news agencies Central China

Television and Xinhua (Goodspeed A1). In an uncharacteristic move, reporters ignored the directive and still filed and broadcast stories from the quake zone (Garnault and McDonald 1). Some television news stations, for example, even provided continuous coverage of the disaster (Fan A18). Although reporters ignored the directive, the instruction also functioned strategically to secure publicity for Premier Wen's quake zone tour immediately after the quake.

Chinese Web censors tacitly acknowledged their inability to keep pace with the speed of netizens' online commentary, and the CCP abandoned most all attempts at online censorship. Instead, the central government chose to let media coverage of the premier's tour shape public opinion (Goodspeed A1). This tactic initially worked in the central government's favor, and prompted the propaganda department to issue the aforementioned directive calling for stories that promoted the "spirit of the central government" and its unifying force (Goodspeed A1). One Chinese blogger took to the Web posting a comment that equated Premier Wen's tour of the quake zone to that of President George W. Bush's visit to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina (Fowler and Dean 9). The *People's Daily* newspaper printed an editorial just two days after the quake praising the state's "open and effective news coverage" (Goodspeed A1).

Despite this positive undercurrent, the fact remained that buildings surviving the earthquake were largely not those paid for with government funds. Thus the public's suspicions of corrupt deals between education officials and contractors were born (York, "Beijing Can't Muzzle" A1). These very suspicions prompted outrage in parents who lost children in the collapsed schools. Initially allowed to speak out, parents voiced their losses to whomever might listen – whether media or otherwise (Garnaut and McDonald

1). From the outset, netizens had commented online about this potential corruption. On the discussion site Tianya, one user posted on May 13, “How come it’s the schools that fall down first? Why are government offices so sturdy?” In response, another user wrote back, “Government (officials) think their flesh is more valuable. Many schools are built of little more than bean curd dregs – and who would dare to build a government office like that?” (“China Laments Collapsed Schools” 2). Microblogging site FanFou had equally critical comments posted to it. Visitors commented, “Why were most of those killed in the earthquake children?” and “How many donations will really reach the disaster area?” (Anna n.p.). Questions like these now spurred state censors back to their work of monitoring and removing inflammatory online posts (Anna n.p.). It is around this same timeframe that the Chinese Ministry of Public Security announced it had punished about 17 “rumor mongers” for online posting of “sensational” messages about the earthquake (Fowler and Dean 9; Anna n.p.). Evidence exists that some comments criticizing local government’s disaster response disappeared entirely off the Tianya site (Anna n.p.). Similarly, a search on Chinese search engine Baidu of the keywords *Sichuan* and *school* did not yield any resulting news articles about parents’ reactions to the collapses or the loss of life (Olszewski n.p.)

Had Baidu not blocked these keyword combinations, a list of news stories undoubtedly would have emerged. The *Southern Weekend* newspaper ran a series of investigative stories focusing on the poorly constructed schools demolished by the quake. The stories described the schools as “manmade disaster,” and quoted officials who were forthcoming about the complicity of local governments in erecting sub-standard structures (York, “Beijing Can’t Muzzle” A1). A business periodical, the *Henan Shang*

Bao, printed an article about a contractor who built a school for \$40,000 in 1986.

Although the building was listed as “dangerous,” the contractor found an inspector to pass it off as having no structural issues. Similarly, the *Outlook Weekly* newspaper reported on flimsy building materials like reinforcing rods capable of being bent easily by hand (York, “Beijing Can’t Muzzle” A1). Once government officials acknowledged potential corruption in the construction of schools, a Xinhua report answered to the allegations. The report blamed the elevated death toll not only on the possibility of weak infrastructure, but also argued that overcrowded schools simply would not have allowed for students to easily evacuate with enough time once the quake hit (Blanchard n.p.).

Citizens’ outright questioning of shoddy school construction, along with parents’ vocal attempts at obtaining government accountability, prompted the central government to change course with regard to its initial transparency. If the week following the quake was characterized by openness, the weeks to come were marked by the state back-pedaling on its promise of media accessibility (Guthrie n.p.). The CCP outlined a number of topics as off-limits for reporters, instead urging media to “report on the central government’s decision making and management of the earthquake aftermath” (Guthrie n.p.; Olszewski n.p.). The central government would also work to recalibrate its stance on media freedoms in anticipation of the more than 20,000 journalists working out of the Olympic Press Center in advance of the Beijing opening ceremonies (Guthrie n.p.). Reporters at the center encountered blocks on a multitude of websites to include those of Amnesty International, Radio FreeAsia, any sites related to Tibet and Taiwan and, for a time, the BBC website (Guthrie n.p.). By June’s arrival, and as parent protests cropped up

throughout the quake zone, the government would forbid any reporting about the organizing groups (Olszewski n.p.).

Amid the formation of both netizen and state media messages, a number of individual activists gained notoriety for contributing to the online dialogue. Huang Qi, the founder of an established human rights website centered on Sichuan, was detained by state police on June 10 after leaving a restaurant in Chengdu. After his capture, Huang was held in a detention house and charged with “illegal possession of state secrets,” a charge typically leveled to quell dissent (Drew B6). The charge likely stemmed from Huang’s use of his website regarding the earthquake: He had allegedly collected information from parents about the collapsed schools with the eventual aim of exposing related government corruption (Drew B6; “China Arrests Activists” n.p.). Huang then penned and posted articles to his website outlining the schools’ structural problems (Hooker A10).

Retired school teacher Zeng Hongling inadvertently found herself at the heart of government attention after a friend posted private writings of Zeng’s online (Hooker A10; “Woman Held after Posting” n.p.). Observing the quake aftermath in Mianyang, Zeng wrote three essays and sent them from her home computer to a friend. The friend, in turn, posted these personal accounts about the quake zone online. Eventually, the essays with titles like “My Personal Experience in the Earthquake” and “Earthquake Relief Efforts Fully Reveal the True Face of Party Officials,” were posted to ObserveChina.com, a Chinese-language site hosted in the United States (“Woman Held after Posting” n.p.). On June 17, plainclothes officers arrested Zeng in Chengdu, and charged her with “inciting subversion” (Hooker A10).

On June 25, Liu Shaokun, a Sichuan Province school employee, was detained at Guanghan Middle School for allegedly posting photographs of collapsed schools online (Fairclough A7). Liu was detained for “inciting people to illegally petition the government and for seriously disrupting social order” (Hooker A10). News reports indicated that Liu had travelled throughout the quake zone with the intent of organizing parent protests, and taking photos to post online (Fairclough A7). By July 31, state police sentenced Liu to a labor camp for one year, charging him with “re-education through labor” for “disseminating rumours and destroying social order” (Hooker A10). Again, this type of punishment is commonly designed to quiet anti-government activity, and subsequently does not require a formal charge or trial (Gee A17).

While these activists’ voices centered on poorly built schools, the blog of artist and architect Ai Weiwei also contributed to further dialogue of dissent. Invited to contribute to the website Sina.com as a blogger, Ai had established a Web presence on the site since October 2005 (Ambrozy xxi). Taken by the Web platform’s reach and immediacy, Ai utilized his blog to showcase not only his artistic expression but also comment on politically sensitive matters in China (Ambrozy xxii). Inevitably among those topics in May 2008 was the Sichuan earthquake and criticism of the government’s disregard for accountability and the loss of young lives. Ambrozy points out that while online dissent about this topic was already roiling, it was Ai who through his blog was the “most direct” in commenting (xxiii).

Ten days after the quake, in a blog entry entitled *Grief*, Ai wrote, “Before we let murky tears cloud our already unclear vision, we need to face up to the way the world works. The true misfortune of the dead lies in the unconsciousness and apathy of the

living, in the ignorance of the value of life by those who simply float through it, in our numbness toward the right to survival and expression, in our distortions of justice, equality, and freedom” (150). On June 21, Ai wrote again about the earthquake, this time mocking the Department of Education’s shirking off of responsibility and commenting on the Chinese media’s message of unavoidable death in disaster. In this entry entitled *Forget About It*, he wrote, “No need to reflect on this or to suspect why it might be so, for misery has long been an endless spiritual resource in ‘regenerating the nation.’ ... For years, deaths on such a vast and mighty scale have created ‘fortunate ghosts.’ At least they will never have to experience another startling death” (Ai 157).

Blog entries like these garnered Ai much attention, and as he and a group of volunteers rallied across the quake zone to gather more information from parents about their deceased children, his blog eventually became too great a threat (Ambrozy xxiii-xxiv). Deletions from his blog by the site host became more commonplace (Ambrozy xxiii). After authorities monitored Ai by way of telephone, text, video surveillance and firsthand harassment, Ai’s blog was eventually closed on May 28, 2009 (Ambrozy xxiii-xxiv).

CONSTRUCTION OF NETWORKS & ORGANIZATIONS

One of the first reported mentions of a mass gathering of organizing parents came about on May 27, with media coverage garnering attention more so for its accompanying imagery. On this day in Mianzhu about 200 parents gathered at the site of a collapsed school and angrily confronted a local official. The Mianzhu city secretary pleaded with the parents to “trust his government to handle the investigation” (Oster A15). The photo

was snapped as the city secretary begged the gathered parents not to follow through with their threats of elevating their complaints to a higher level of government, according to one parent in attendance that day. The photograph, published by the *Southern Metropolis Daily*, sparked much online discussion once it was published and re-posted to websites (Oster A15).

Children's Day in China, celebrated on June 1, also saw an outcropping of organized protests throughout the entire quake zone. In Mianzhu, parents gathered at a school yard to stage a sit-in. Parents convened at a school in the town of Wufu and shouted slogans about corrupt politicians. In Juyuan, gathered parents were dispersed by soldiers who then sealed off the grounds of a middle school to search for bodies. And in Dujiangyan, 600 people gathered at Xinjian Primary School wearing white t-shirts that read, "We Firmly Ask for Justice for the Dead Students," in red lettering. The other side of the shirts read, "Severely Punish the Corruption in the Tofu Construction" (Jacobs, "Child's Day without the Children" 4).

Ai Weiwei's blog also played a role in real-time organizing when he and a group of volunteers formed Citizen Investigation. Using his blog to invite others, Ai united with about 100 volunteers with the express aim of putting "pressure [on] the Sichuan provincial government to take responsibility for the shoddy quality of the school buildings that had collapsed" (Ambrozy xxiii). Together, the group conducted interviews with families, officials and workers to compile information and generate an accurate list of the names of students killed. This list flew in the face of government officials who claimed an accurate student death count already existed, despite their inability at the time to provide the count's source or authenticity.

The team's investigative work on generating this list shed abundant light on the situation, and produced a wealth of even more threatening anti-government information. Transcripts of volunteers' interviews were posted to the blog, only to later be removed by censors. Video footage of Citizen Investigation's work in the quake zone was eventually edited into a documentary distributed via Twitter. According to Ambrozy, the team's work "produced a list of names, with the date of birth, school, grade and a parent/guardian contact number for more than five thousand children (the listed numbered 5,210 in August 2010)" (xxiii). As previously mentioned above, Ai's blog, and a great deal of this content, ceased to exist as of May 2009. Although Ai and the Citizen Investigation volunteers met with surveillance and harassment by the state, their work continued via alternate online channels like Twitter and volunteers' blogs hosted on overseas platforms. Tensions further came to a fore in August 2009 when Ai and a group of activists travelled to Chengdu in an attempt to testify in court on behalf of a detained volunteer (Ambrozy xxiv). On August 12, police broke into Ai's hotel room at 3 a.m. and a struggle ensued, resulting in Ai sustaining serious head injuries that would eventually require his undergoing surgery for a cerebral hemorrhage (Ambrozy xxv).

Table 2.1 offers a summation of each Chinese incident's three corresponding descriptive sections. Each incident is thus outlined here first by its characteristic agent interaction, which also develops to form the focus of eventual network formation. This is then followed by the state's media message, citizen/netizen message and, finally, the scenario's outcome. This framework will be applied both here in Chapter 2 and in Chapter 3, and will set the stage for the comparative analysis in Chapter 4 of all incidents presented.

Table 2.1 Framework for Chinese Incidents

Incident	Agent Interaction/ Focus of Network Formation	Media Message	Citizen/Netizen Message	Outcome
Deng Yujiao, 2009	Single Individual vs. Local Officials	Victim Blaming	Abuse of Power/ Government Corruption	Victim Acquittal/ Reduced Charges
Sanlu Milk, 2008	Multiple Citizens/Families vs. State/Business	Scapegoating of Business Middlemen	Government Corruption in Business	Business Accountability & Re-evaluation of State Food Safety System
Collapsed Schools of Sichuan Quake, 2008	Multiple Citizens/Families vs. Local & State Officials	‘Unavoidable’ Natural Disaster	Government Corruption in Infrastructure	Scant acknowledgment by state

III. EGYPT

This research now turns away from China and toward three incidents that took place in Egypt during roughly the same time frame. For the purposes of highlighting the foundational importance of a specific group's use of the Internet, the first incident presented in this chapter reaches back to the year 2005. Much like Chapter 2, this chapter uses as a guide the framework that highlights characteristic agent interaction, which proceeds to become the focus of eventual network formation. This is then followed by the state's media message, citizen/netizen message and, finally, the scenario's outcome.

GROUPS VS. STATE: MAY 25 REFERENDUM VOTE, 2005

On May 10, 2005, the Egyptian parliament announced its majority endorsement of an amendment to Article 76 of the constitution ("Egypt Parliament Approves" n.p.). The amendment would allow for the first time since the 1950s, the inclusion of more than one candidate on the ballot for the presidential election (Wright n.p.). However, a read of the article's revision by opposition party members quickly revealed its paradox: the new requirements called for independent candidates to "win support from at least 65 of the 444 elected members of the lower house of parliament, 90 percent of whom are from Mubarak's party" ("Egypt Constitution Referendum" n.p.). This parliamentary approval of Article 76's revisions would make way for Egyptian citizens to take part in a referendum vote later in the month ("Egypt Parliament Approves" n.p.).

Noting the improbability of an independent's run, opposition group Kefaya immediately called for a boycott of the referendum vote slated for May 25 (Wright n.p.; "Egypt Constitution Referendum" n.p.). Kefaya, Arabic for *enough*, had established itself in 2004, and since December of that year had begun staging demonstrations against Mubarak's rule (Lesch 33; Khan n.p.). The group's cause was clear -- members had reached their threshold in dealing with the regime and opposed the predicted "dynastic succession" of Gamal Mubarak following his father's tenure (Lesch 33; El Hennawy and Fattah n.p.). Kefaya's overt opposition, in combination with the voices of other anti-government groups, signaled the first time in 23 years that Mubarak's rule was so openly challenged (Khan n.p.).

Kefaya maintained a significant role in this time frame for two different reasons. First, it was the first organization to consolidate what Lynch refers to as a "range of ideologies with revolutionary socialists protesting side by side with Muslim Brothers, and liberals with Nasserists" (46). The group did not hold tightly to political parties or professional unions, nor did it represent a single religious viewpoint, thus allowing for a broader membership base (Aboubakr 256). Additionally, Kefaya was the earliest of opposition groups in Egypt to have adopted Internet-based communication technologies to mobilize its membership (Lynch 46; Williams n.p.).

With the referendum vote now scheduled and Kefaya firm in its stance against it, the days leading up to the vote reflected a succession of other opposition groups joining forces with Kefaya. For example, at a meeting of judges in Cairo on May 13, the judges decided collectively to refuse oversight of the presidential election slated for September. Without the judges' presence, the vote would effectively be rendered invalid (Fattah

n.p.). On May 17, four more opposition groups – the Muslim Brotherhood, Wafd, Tagammu and the Nasserists – sided with Kefaya in recommending the boycott of the referendum vote (Wright n.p.). By May 21, the opposition force grew further with the addition of the al-Ghad party also boycotting the referendum (“Egyptian Ghad Party” n.p.).

Amid this growing opposition, on May 24 President Mubarak gave a televised speech urging Egyptians to take part in the referendum vote. In it, he said, “I have full and unlimited confidence that you will turn out to take part, through the referendum, in making a new tomorrow for our country and exploring new and broad horizons in our political life” (Wright n.p.). On May 25, Kefaya and other opposition groups gathered in Cairo to protest the vote, where they were met at the Journalists’ Syndicate by a National Democratic Party (NDP) rally and Egyptian riot police (“Egypt Police Crack Down” n.p.). Violence ensued when riot police provided “protected” oversight of NDP supporters as they took turns brutally beating opposition protestors. On this day, numerous Kefaya members are beaten, and 10 are arrested (“Egypt Police Crack Down” n.p.). A number of women protestors, some journalists, were also beaten and sexually assaulted (“Egypt Backs Election” n.p.).

One day after the vote, the Egyptian government announced that 83 percent of voters backed the referendum, with voter participation reaching 53 percent (“Egypt Backs Election” n.p.). Reuters reports an inconsistency noted on the day of the referendum: While polling station officials said that 50 to 80 percent of voters had turned out two to three hours before they closed, the news services’ correspondents failed to witness any long lines of voters gathered during this same time frame (Abdellah n.p.). Opposition

parties, on the other hand, claimed that officials inflated the turnout numbers to bring legitimacy to the vote (“Claims of U.S. Backing” n.p.).

Kefaya and other opposition groups, meanwhile, accused the NDP of intimidating the protestors gathered on voting day, with Kefaya specifically accusing NDP members at the rally of having “molested women colleagues” (“Egypt Backs Election” n.p.). This starts a succession of third-party commentary about the protests and the state’s excessive use of force against the demonstrators. May 26 also found U.S. President George W. Bush condemning the attacks, and calling for “international observers to oversee the forthcoming [presidential] elections in Egypt” (“Bush Criticizes Attacks” n.p.; “Egypt’s Government” n.p.). Later that same day White House spokesman Scott McClellan stated plainly that, “There is no excuse for attacks on peaceful demonstrators. Anyone who attacks peaceful demonstrators must be arrested and tried, that’s our view” (“Bush Criticizes Attacks” n.p.). The Egyptian government, however, offered no comment on the brutality shown toward the protestors (El Hennawy and Fattah n.p.). Days later, the NDP minimizes the actions at the May 25 protest, referring to the brutality as simply “emotional tension” (“Egyptian Women Demand” n.p.). Human Rights Watch released a statement on May 27 that echoed the sentiment of the White House. In it, the group urged Mubarak to launch an investigation into the brutality carried out May 25. “At a minimum,” said Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director of HRW, “the president should appoint people with unquestioned integrity to investigate this state-sanctioned brutality” (“U.S. Rights Watchdog” n.p.).

In the short term, the NDP’s handling of the referendum served as a portent of the forthcoming presidential election. In September, Mubarak was re-elected for a fifth term.

With Kefaya's message of "enough" now seemingly less relevant, its multiple loose affiliations, an attribute that once made it more challenging for the Egyptian government to topple, now contributed to its decline. Though Kefaya continued to exist in the coming years, it did so in a much more minimized capacity (Singerman17-18).

FORMATION OF THE MEDIA MESSAGE

The May 25 referendum vote evoked from the state a media message of patriotism as it called for democratic reform. First evidence of this is seen when the Egyptian parliament approved the revision of Article 76. Parliament speaker Fathi Surur, in announcing the majority vote, stated that the referendum would pave the way for an "era of democracy and liberalism" ("Egypt Parliament Approves" n.p.). This notion was reiterated once more with the broadcast of Mubarak's speech on state television entreating citizens to participate in the referendum vote, calling it "a decisive moment in our contemporary history" (Wright, "Mubarak Asks" n.p.). Advertisements placed in print publications and on state TV stations further supported the president's call for citizens to vote. With NDP publicity for the vote at its height, equally noteworthy was the absence of advertising in the name of opposition candidates. This fact pointed back to the NDP's control of the media, as opposition parties had few forums by which to announce candidacy or advertise initiatives to a majority population (Wright, "Mubarak Asks" n.p.). On May 25, state television deliberately shaped its news coverage of the vote when TV stations aired footage of Egyptian ministers voting at polling locations and conducted interviews with NDP supporters who, following the states cues, referred to the vote as a "landmark for democracy" ("Egypt Police Crack Down" n.p.). When the government announced the referendum's results and voter turnout rates the following day, the state

seized yet another opportunity to reinforce citizens' patriotism when Interior Minister Habib al-Adli "hailed the 53 percent of the country's 32.5 million voters who cast their ballots ... as having 'expressed themselves freely and displayed their patriotism'" ("Egypt Backs Election Change" n.p.).

Kefaya activists, meanwhile, held firmly to the message conveyed by the translation of the group's name. Kefaya member's patience with the Mubarak regime had run its course (Singerman 16), and the group's actions leading up to the referendum vote aimed to chip away at the NDP's façade of patriotic reform. On May 10, when parliament's approval of the article's revision was announced, the opposition noted immediately the unrealistic requisites levied upon non-NDP candidates. Kefaya declared in that moment its establishment of a "campaign of civil disobedience" and proclaimed its boycott on the referendum ("Egypt Parliament Approves" n.p.). In stories appearing in this time period, Kefaya members used the words "sham," "farce," and "phony" to describe the vote (Egypt Parliament Approves" n.p.; "Egypt Police Crack Down" n.p.; El Hennawy and Fattah 9). And, immediately following voting day, Kefaya spokesman Abdel Halim Qandeel said in an interview with *The New York Times* that, "This was not a referendum, but an extension of Mubarak's rule and a guarantee that Gamal will inherit from him. We refuse for the people of Egypt to be insulted like this" (El Hennawy and Fattah 9). Having already organized a series of demonstrations reaching back to December 2004, Kefaya activists were also equipped with a number of chants equally disparaging of the regime (Khan n.p.) This paved the way for slogans like, "Tell Mubarak the coward: enough is enough," and, "No to another mandate, no dictatorship and

arbitrary policies,” to come into use at the May 25 demonstration (“Egypt Police Crack Down” n.p.).

CONSTRUCTION OF NETWORKS & ORGANIZATIONS

Kefaya protestors, along with other opposition party members, gathered on May 25 outside the Journalists’ Syndicate in Cairo to rally against the referendum vote they had started boycotting weeks prior (“Egypt Police Crack Down” n.p.). Two other factions also in attendance that day clashed with opposition group members: Egyptian riot police and NDP supporters who had gathered to buoy Mubarak’s presidency (Abdellah n.p.; “Egypt Police Crack Down” n.p.). What began as a non-violent gathering that day quickly led to police’s use of clubs and sticks to quiet the opposition protestors in Cairo. Some eyewitnesses that day reported protestors leaving with bloodied mouths (“Egypt Police Crack Down” n.p.) One Kefaya protestor found himself surrounded by riot police before being beaten, while others were physically dragged away and then beaten (Abdellah n.p.). Protests were also reported to have taken place on this date in Ismailya, Port Said and Al-Arish, with 46 arrested in Ismailya (“Egypt Police Crack Down” n.p.; Abdellah n.p.). In the day following the protest, Kefaya released a statement saying that, “They [the NDP] unleashed thugs, pickpockets and criminals that were waiving posters of the president in one hand and sticks, knives and stones in the other” (“Egypt Backs Election” n.p.). Judges, who had earlier in the month renounced oversight of the presidential vote, were largely absent from polling locations that day too (“Egypt Backs Election” n.p.). By doing this, the judges’ boycott effectively “crush[ed] any attempt to brand the polls as free and fair” (El Hennawy and Fattah n.p.).

The police brutality of this Black Wednesday demonstration, as it came to be called, transcended previous norms, however, as it also included the beating and sexual assault of a number of women protestors. News reports included the eyewitness account of a 19- or 20-year-old woman being dragged on the ground, and then beaten by riot police with batons. Mubarak supporters are said to have “groped three women journalists, tearing clothes and pulling the headscarf off one” (Abdellah n.p.). In an interview with *Agence France Presse*, Egyptian journalist Iman Taha recounted her brutality at the hands of NDP supporters who, essentially supervised by riot police, shoved her against a wall and kicked her twice above the waist. Her assailants continued beating her long after she fell onto the floor, and told her that, “Your cries won’t help, you should not have come here in the first place. That’ll teach you [a] lesson for demonstrating” (“Egyptian Journalist” n.p.). Another Egyptian journalist told Human Rights Watch that a “gang of 20 or 30 NDP guys” lunged at her, with one groping her. A male shouted out, seemingly as a signal to others, “I have a lady, let her through.” That’s when the others began pulling her hair, ripping her shirt and touching her everywhere. The woman said that following this, the men began kicking her and groping her again while “laughing and cheering” (“US Rights Watchdog” n.p.). These attacks on women were regarded as especially reprehensible within the nation’s “conservative Islamic society,” and, in the short term, spurred women to organize initiatives protesting the brutal assaults (Slackman and el-Naggar, “Assault on Women” 1; “Egyptian Women Demand” n.p.). The attacks also further unified Kefaya with other opposition groups, as all agreed the brutality was yet another sign of Mubarak’s corrupt rule (Slackman and el-Naggar, “Assault on Women” 1).

As previously noted, Kefaya is considered a forerunner for its innovative use of Web technologies. Although reference to precise uses of these technologies as they relate specifically to the May 25 referendum protest is scarce, evidence of their general usage by Kefaya may best recount here how they aided in organizing on this day. Kefaya was comprised of founders largely described as “older leadership” (Onodera 50). But as university students and young professionals joined the opposition cause, Youth for Change emerged as an independent group operating under the Kefaya organizational umbrella (Onodera 49). More well-versed with Internet technologies and focused on forging largely “interpersonal networks,” Youth for Change communicated among its members using e-mails and blogs. It also mobilized protests quickly by sending text messages and building e-mail distribution lists (Onodera 50). Kefaya circumnavigated content restrictions in newspapers by placing ads on websites, instead (Oweidat et al. 21). To further get its message out, Kefaya created Web banners, and even political cartoons that were placed both on its Website and on blogs that regularly worked with the group (Onodera 50; Oweidat et al. 21). Kefaya also exploited the posting of imagery and video footage online, exposing the Egyptian public to issues of police brutality and sexual assault at the hands of state police (Onodera 50; Oweidat et al. 21-22). Gunning and Baron note that visual imagery of corruption struck a significant chord, as it allowed Egyptian people to go online and be an eyewitness to these acts (57). According to Onodera, use of these technologies “proved to be important tools in organizing popular opposition to the NDP and President Mubarak in the summer of 2005” (50). Kefaya’s Web presence had begun simply with a site allowing for unrestricted membership and an

online forum for citizen's grievances, and obviously grew quickly to encompass a variety of uses (Oweidat et al.xx; Gunning and Baron 57; Onodera 50).

Another facet of Kefaya's Internet strategy was its well-developed relationships with a number of bloggers (Oweidat et al. 23). The group cultivated a community of bloggers during this time frame that mirrored the political grievances of Youth for Change (Gunning and Baron 57). While some bloggers were Kefaya members, others were simply individuals who used their blogs as a platform to voice opposition against Mubarak's rule (Oweidat et al. 23). With a common purpose in mind, Kefaya placed the banners of individual bloggers on its website, while bloggers carried the Kefaya logo on their sites. Bloggers also re-enforced Kefaya's maintaining an online record of human rights abuses by posting the same video and photos for its blog visitors (Oweidat et al. 23). And in 2005, blog Misr Digital became Kefaya's "online source for information" (Korany 266). By 2006, a year after Mubarak's re-election, this community of bloggers linked to Kefaya worked also to support labor issues. In an interview with Ahmed Maher, at this time a Youth for Change member, he said that blogs began making efforts to "show that the problem lay with the regime rather than the factories and thus was political" (Gunning and Baron 63).

MULTIPLE INDIVIDUALS VS. STATE OFFICIALS: MAHALLA TEXTILE WORKERS' STRIKE, 2008

In early March 2008 discontent arose once more among textile workers at the state-owned Misr Company for Spinning and Weaving in Mahalla al-Kobra, about 60 miles north of Cairo (Gamal n.p.). Located in the nation's textile hub, the company

employed about 250,000 workers who struggled financially amid Egypt's rising economic inflation and their stagnating salaries (Morrow and Moussa al-Omrani, "Protests Over High" n.p.). The workers' lagging salaries had not been commensurate with the ballooning prices of bread and cooking oil, basic staples for survival (Slackman and el-Naggar 6). Frustrated with these circumstances, the textile workers planned an April 6, 2008, strike to demand higher wages and protest against high food costs ("Fresh Clashes" n.p.). These Mahalla employees already had a history of organizing around grievances, and the date of April 6 was chosen to commemorate the anniversary of a strike held on the same date in 2006 (Soliman 60).

Around this same time, 27-year-old Ahmed Maher heard murmurs of the textile workers' planned strike in April. The Cairo-based civil engineer and activist joined his friend Esra Abdel-Fattah on March 23 to create a Facebook group supporting the effort (Wolman n.p.). By doing so, Maher and Abdel-Fattah aimed to gain membership and increase awareness of the protests beyond Mahalla. They named the group 'April 6: A Nationwide Strike' (Morrow and Moussa al-Omrani, "Protests Over High" n.p.), and, through Facebook, sent out about 300 invitations calling on others to join the cause (Wolman n.p.). By the following day, the group had gained 3,000 new members, and, by March 31, its membership grew to 40,000 (Wolman n.p.). Although page administrators communicated with followers primarily online, members also worked offline to gain further support for Cairo-based organizing. The April 6 Youth, as the group called itself, shared its own plans for protest efforts via TV ads in the form of news tickers and scribbled information on paper banners and money (Knickmeyer A1; Wolman n.p.). Small bills were specifically chosen to relay messages, as the group determined these

denominations would circulate through more of the poor's hands than others (Knickmeyer A1). By April 5, just one day before the scheduled strike, the Facebook group had reached a total of 60,000 members (Morrow and Moussa al-Omrani, "Protests Over High" n.p.).

Originally, textile workers at the Misr Company in Mahalla had planned to strike at their work day's end on April 6 ("Fresh Clashes" n.p.). However, a number of factors transpired that would ultimately cause a departure from this original strategy. Company officials floated the idea on April 5 that employees' salaries might be increased, and labor leaders responded readily by calling off protest plans. On that same day before the scheduled strike, the Egyptian government deployed extra police to Mahalla to maintain a presence and good order (Morrow and Moussa al-Omrani, "Protests Over High" n.p.). To further reinforce its low tolerance for protestors, the Egyptian Interior Ministry released a statement "warning of 'immediate and firm measures' against perceived attempts to 'demonstrate, disrupt road traffic or the running of public establishments.'" The ministry also outlined the expectation that all businesses should plan on staying open for the duration of the work day (Morrow and Moussa al-Omrani, "Protests Over High" n.p.).

Despite some textile workers' cancellation of the strike and a heightened police presence, thousands in Mahalla still gathered on April 6 at the end of their workday. Citizens chanted, "Enough, it's too much," and gathered to throw stones at police ("Fresh Clashes" n.p.; Slackman and el-Naggar 6). Police returned fire by launching tear gas at protestors (Slackman and el-Naggar 6). The strike in Mahalla eventually gave way to two days of rioting that left three dead, hundreds injured and between 450 and 600 detained for inciting violence (Morrow and Moussa al-Omrani, "Activists Plan General Strike"

n.p.). Damage left from the riots included burned cars, several schools and more than 10 businesses (“Fresh Clashes” n.p.). In another show of anger, some rioters pulled down and destroyed large posters of President Mubarak’s likeness that had been hanging in the town’s square (Morrow and Moussa al-Omrani, “Protests Over High” n.p.).

Meanwhile in Cairo, the high police concentration was enough to deter most protestors from gathering in city streets (“Fresh Clashes” n.p.). Although the *New York Times* reported that three Cairo universities saw student protests, city streets remained largely empty with a number of stores shuttered. While police presence in Tahrir Square stopped protestors from gathering there, 100 members of a lawyers’ syndicate still gathered on a building’s rooftop and chanted, “Down, down with Hosni Mubarak” (Slackman and el-Naggar 6). Eventually, police broke up the group. To some, the lack of protestors on Cairo streets signaled a failure in organizing nationwide protest efforts; to others, the silent streets demonstrated heeding the word of organizers who had called for citizens to stay home this day (Morrow and Moussa al-Omrani, “Activists Plan General Strike” n.p.). It was also in Cairo on April 6 that Abdel-Fattah, one of the Facebook group’s administrators, was arrested by police while meeting with friends at a café (Wolman n.p.). By around this date the Facebook group she had helped create now had about 70,000 members (Richter 20).

Almost a month after the strikes, Mubarak announced on April 30 an increase of public sector workers’ salaries by 30 percent (Michael n.p.). This measure, whose specifications for implementation were not outlined, would aid about 6 million Egyptian workers (Nasrawi 13). Prior to this announcement, government officials had in the interim tried to quell Mahalla workers’ dissent with a number of incentives. For example,

two days into the Mahalla riots, Egypt's prime minister along with four others, visited workers at the mill "offering bonuses and more investment in the town's giant factory to placate workers angry over high prices" (Gamal n.p.). In exchange for not taking part in protests, the ministers had promised workers a bonus of 30 days' pay, a doubling of bread subsidies and improved medical care at work (Gamal n.p.). But less than one week after Mubarak's announcing salary increases, the Egyptian parliament passed a bill on May 5 that would effectively raise taxes and increase prices on a number of daily necessities. The result was a 40 to 50 percent increase in the cost of gasoline and diesel, used for public transportation; a 58 percent increase in natural gas, used for cooking and by factories; and, a 10 percent increase in the price of cigarettes (Nasrawi 13). The salary increase in conjunction with the bill's price hikes was summarized best by Saad al-Katatni, a member of the Egyptian parliament. He described the passing of the bill by saying, "They are taking in their right hand what they are giving in their left hand" (Nasrawi 13).

FORMATION OF THE MEDIA MESSAGE

Assessing state news coverage of the April 6 Mahalla strike presents a unique challenge here in that minimal reporting of the event exists in the Egyptian press. This is attributed largely to a well-recognized epoch of repression of free speech and on journalists' accessibility to news events ("Crackdown on Free" n.p.). Thus, outlined briefly here instead will be documented acts of repression taken against reporting of the strikes, and the little notable evidence of state reaction reported in the media about the protest. The latter will serve to construct, albeit loosely, this research's conception of the state media message.

Although the state did not issue a directive banning press coverage of the strike, it did censor images and video footage that had the potential to appear in Egyptian media (Wolman n.p.). This need to stop the flow of information about the riots is further supported by the state's actions as they occurred at the protest site in Mahalla. Among the first mention of journalists' repression came a mere day after the riot's start, when American freelance journalist James Buck, along with his Egyptian translator, were detained after Buck took photos of families participating in a hunger strike (Michael n.p.; "Photographers Arrested" n.p.). This sweep also saw the arrest and detainment of nine other Egyptian cameramen and photographers covering the riot, including one working for Reuters news service (Michael n.p.). Although Buck was released after one day's detainment, he chose to stay at the police station where his translator remained in police custody ("Photographers Arrested" n.p.). The camera card containing Buck's photos was confiscated by the Egyptian police (Michael n.p.).

In a separate incident at the site of the protests, security officials detained a reporter from independent Egyptian weekly paper *El Fagr* and two television journalists. This time the arrests stemmed from the journalists' attempt to cover a meeting between demonstrators and a group of professors and activists who wished to "express solidarity" with Mahalla residents ("Photographers Arrested" n.p.). This visiting group, however, never made it to the protest site, as their vehicles were surrounded by about 100 plain-clothes police at a security checkpoint ("Photographers Arrested" n.p.). Similarly, three satellite television stations were "blackout" by the state's satellite company, allegedly at the request of the United States, for broadcasting images of the protest (Olszewski n.p.; "Crackdown on Free" n.p.). By fall of 2008, an Egyptian court had fined the Cairo News

Company for “operating without a license ... after the firm aired shots of protesters stamping on a picture of the country’s president” and re-broadcast those images to its network of stations (Olszewski n.p.). It’s also during this period that both administrators of the April 6 Facebook page are arrested, though on separate dates, for their online activism (Knickmeyer A1). These detainments will be explained in greater detail in this chapter’s next section.

The few stories about the Mahalla strike crafted by the state-run press were characterized by journalists and activists as unfair in their assessment of protestors’ motivations. Demonstrators were depicted as “saboteurs,” who were therefore deserving of the security police’s forceful, and at times deadly, reciprocal actions (“Crackdown on Free” n.p.). Menassat.com reported the staging of injuries by police at the protest site for the explicit purpose of presenting to journalists a scenario in which police could “pose as victims of mob violence” (“Crackdown on Free” n.p.). In the Egyptian Interior Ministry’s statement released one day ahead of the strike, it referred to potential participants as “provocateurs” supporting “illegal movements” that worked against the “interests of the Egyptian people” (Morrow and Moussa al-Omrani, “Protest Over High” n.p.). The second day of the Mahalla strike brought with it the visit of Egypt’s prosecutor general, who had come expressly to assess the riot’s resulting damage. In an interview there with a state-run television station, the prosecutor general echoed once more the message of citizens as instigators, saying that, “There are people who want to exploit this matter [prices] for political reasons and ambitions and in a cheap and stupid way” (“Fresh Clashes” n.p.). As can be seen here, the state created a narrative that dismissed citizens’

economic woes, and instead focused on a message of citizens as initiators of illegal, unpatriotic activities (Richter 21).

While state censors contained as much imagery of the April 6 strike as possible from the public, bloggers and April 6 group members capitalized on the opportunity to post them online (Wolman n.p.). Just as the formation of the state's media message differs here than in other cases, so too does that of the April 6 Youth. Without sustained coverage of the riots in the press, this essentially allowed for the activist group to create an uninterrupted active versus incrementally reactive message. As such, the group maintained its narrative of opposing the climate of corruption by way of social and economic issues, and used it as grounds for organizing protest nationwide. As Morrow and Moussa al-Omrani report, protest leaders took to the Internet to ask that people "register their dissatisfaction with the political and economic status quo by either staying at home or by staging protest marches throughout the country" ("Activists Plan General" n.p.). An Associated Press account leading up the April 6 Mahalla strike similarly indicates that the planned protest was the "first major attempt by opposition groups to turn the past year's labor unrest into a wider political protest against the government of President Hosni Mubarak" (Schemm n.p.). April 6 Youth's cause solidified social and economic discontent in the hands of youth and in conjunction with the textile workers' strike (Richter 20; Saleh 480). According to Sika, "The April 6 movement ... fram[ed] its solidarity with the al-Mahalla textile workers with the ideals of social justice, equality of opportunity, and human dignity that lie at the root of both political and economic demands" (77).

In the run up to April 6, members of the Facebook group started changing their profile photos to that of the April 6 Youth logo. This contributed to a sustained digital presence, as all members of the group repeatedly set eyes on the same image each time they would log in to Facebook (Wolman n.p.). Group members would also individually post links back to the April 6 Youth group's page, another way of continuously keeping at a fore the presence of the group to online members and beyond (Wolman n.p.). As the group grew in membership, it did manage to become the subject of few print articles and even influenced the discussion topics in television programming ("The Power of Facebook" n.p.). On the morning of April 6, Abdel-Fattah posted to Facebook a missive perhaps designed to inspire the day's protest. In this post, she specified the protest would be against "oppression and corruption" and then proceeded to list demands the public either needed in everyday life or should reject as part of the protest date. The list included such items as "No work, No selling, We need Just Judiciary, We need Enough Salaries, We need Work, No Thug Policemen, No Price Hikes, No Torture in Police Stations, No Bribes, No Detentions" ("Crossing Red Lines" G6).

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Even though this group's ability to organize effectively on Cairo streets has been called into question, April 6 Youth organizers nevertheless took deliberate actions – both online and offline – to further the group's goal of spurring the Egyptian people out of political apathy (Saleh 480). Group founder Maher described April 6 Youth's effort by saying, "Our main job is that the people have awareness of their rights and know how to break their handcuffs and remove their shackles" (Knickermeier A1). Among the first demonstrative steps of employing the group's strategy was the collaborative effort of

Maher and Abdel-Fattah in simply creating the ‘April 6: A Nationwide Strike’ Facebook group. Capitalizing on Facebook’s inherent interactivity and formation of loose networks, the digital platform served to unite members in an “alternative” space where anti-government discussion could openly take place (Fam n.p.; Shehata 119). In a May 2008 interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, Maher equated April 6 Youth’s online presence to a virtual, 24-hour-a-day meeting where members could “see how other people are living, and ... reject many government policies” (Fam n.p.).

This sustained “meeting” via Facebook would give way to real-time meetings, too. As the April 6 Youth amassed online membership, the group’s organizers transitioned a number of its activities offline. While group members may have made initial contact with one another on Facebook, April 6 Youth organizers also held meetings where members could put a face to his or her accompanying online profile. Special care had to be taken, however, for the group not to attract too much attention meeting offline, as the gathering of five or more individuals without a permit in Egypt can result in arrest or beatings by police (Wolman n.p.). April 6 Youth also took a cue from another precursor opposition movement, and established its organizational structure like that of Kefaya. As such, April 6 Youth was comprised of an elected general coordinator, four sub-coordinators, a steering committee and specialized committees and governorate committees (Shehata 115). Further offline activities came in the form of already outlined actions taken to publicize the April 6 through television advertisements, paper banners in public places, and written notes on currency.

With a now flourishing membership base, April 6 Youth took to broadening its online strategy by creating and maintaining dozens of Facebook pages (Saleh 480).

Recruitment pages held a separate presence from those dedicated to coordinating protest strategies, and the group also created tiered-pages that separately encompassed nation-, district-, and governorate-level organizing. Additionally, each of these pages had an English language counterpart to co-exist alongside each's Arabic version (Saleh 480). In Wolman's account of the inner workings of the April 6 Youth, he notes that Maher's awareness of the Facebook group's increasing new membership paved the way for the creation of more sub-groups (n.p.). This influx of new members also provided further opportunity for the group to "contact bloggers and other politically oriented online forums ... asking them to support the workers by joining the April 6 group" (Wolman n.p.). According to Maher, just one year after its start, April 6 Youth had roughly 2,000 active members across 12 governorates throughout Egypt (Shehata 115).

The morning of the April 6 strike in Mahalla, Maher and Abdel-Fattah shared last-minute details about organizing protests in Cairo via text and e-mail (Wolman n.p.). April 6 Youth employed a comprehensive use of digital tools to disseminate varying messages. According to Khamis and Vaughn, the group used "cell phones, blogs, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to document police excesses, organize meetings and protests, alert each other to police movements, and get legal help for those who had been arrested" (147). This latter use came into relevance the very day of the strike, when Abdel-Fattah was arrested that afternoon (Wolman n.p.).

Nearly two weeks later and with Abdel-Fattah still detained, her mother wrote an appeal to President Mubarak asking for the release of her daughter from prison. The emotional plea asking for Esra's freedom was published in the Egyptian press, and, on April 23, officials released Esra ("Egypt Frees Facebook Activist" n.p.). After being freed,

Abdel-Fattah made a brief public statement that became a declaration of her departure from political activism (Wolman n.p.). According to news reports, Esra Abdel-Fattah was one of many activists and bloggers arrested throughout the country during this period (Knickmeyer A1). While the Egyptian government likely aimed to make an example of Abdel-Fattah's arrest by signaling that "mobilizing virtual activism against the regime can bear individual costs" (Richter 21), it also had the opposing effect of catapulting public opinion in favor of Abdel-Fattah and the April 6 Youth (Wolman n.p.). Media coverage of her arrest and subsequent release garnered attention from foreign and few independent Egyptian newspapers, but the added press brought with it enough publicity to make her the heroine behind the April 6 Youth movement (Wolman n.p.). Despite security officials' initially dismissive reaction to the April 6 organizing taking place online, the detention of Abdel-Fattah clearly signaled the Facebook page's increasing threat level. Her arrest would deliberately reinforce the government's message to activists that anti-government online activity would not go unnoticed (Wolman n.p.).

April 6 Youth page administrator Maher met a similar fate to that of Abdel-Fattah, after heading attempts to organize another strike on Mubarak's May 4 birthday. Though this strike also failed to materialize, Maher was arrested May 7 for his online efforts (Wolman n.p.). Plucked from his vehicle on his drive home by a group of plain-clothes security officials, Maher was then beaten and shoved into the mini-van the officers had arrived in. This began a 12-hour detention in which, according to Maher, he was stripped, beaten, dragged across floors, and threatened with electricity and rape. Ultimately, Maher's captors had hoped to obtain his password to the April 6 Facebook page. The following morning, Maher gave his captors a fake password, which led to his

release (Wolman n.p.). To raise the public's awareness of Maher's arrest, prominent blogger Wael Abbas posted pictures of Maher's bruised body online (Herrera 346).

Maher's role as activist developed further as group organizer and digital administrator of the April 6 Youth Movement. His first experiences with activism, however, were his previously noted membership in Kefaya's Youth for Change. The final Egyptian Internet incident outlined below reflects how Maher eventually merges his own previous experiences as an activist with another growing network of individuals.

INDIVIDUAL VS. STATE OFFICIALS: 'WE ARE ALL KHALED SAID,' 2010

On June 6, 2010, 28-year-old Khaled Said was apprehended by two plain-clothes police officers inside an Internet café in Alexandria. The officers attacked Said, smashing his head against a marble counter inside the café, and then proceeded to continue the beating after dragging Said outside. Despite Said's pleas for them to stop, they beat him in a building entrance where the officers repeatedly took Said's head to the metal grate of a door. According to Said's brother Ahmed, the two officers continued to beat Khaled until well after his death. Initially, Said's lifeless body was left outside the building where he lived. But a police van with officers drove up, removed the body, drove off and returned the body to the same spot minutes later (El Deeb n.p.).

Though the attack was seemingly unprovoked, it was allegedly motivated by the police's discovery that Said possessed video footage capturing Egyptian police sharing the "spoils from a drug bust among themselves." Within days of Said's death, images of his heavily battered body at the morgue began appearing on social networking sites (El Deeb n.p.). In death, Said was unrecognizable and shown in these images to have a

dislocated jaw, ripped lower lip, missing teeth, a skull so beaten it was sunken in, and a trail of dark blood streaming from his head (Ghonim 58). Said's brother, also a U.S.-based lawyer, immediately confirmed the authenticity of the photos, as they verified exactly what his family viewed at the morgue. Simultaneously, Egyptian police stated that the cause of Said's death was under investigation (El Deeb n.p.). Between June 7 and June 12, a Facebook group entitled 'We Are All Khaled Said' (WAAKS) emerged online and called for "those accused of torture to be brought to justice." Within roughly one week, the Facebook group had amassed about 142,000 members (Zayan n.p.).

Around June 9, the Egyptian police informed the Said Family that Khaled's death was caused by a drug overdose prompted when Khaled choked from swallowing a bag of drugs just as he was being apprehended (El Deeb n.p.; Schemm n.p.). Three days later the Egyptian Interior Ministry issued a statement revealing the official autopsy results: Said's cause of death was asphyxiation caused by choking on a bag of drugs ("Khaled Saeid's Uncle" n.p.; Schemm n.p.). Also included in this statement was the accusation that Said had been a known drug user and that "all the small bruises and abrasions were insignificant in his death and that there were no fractures to his skull or any bones" ("Prosecutor General" n.p.; Schemm n.p.). The official police statement, however, went even further in its allegations, indicating that Said not only used drugs, but also was "wanted for convictions in absentia for theft and weapons possession, in addition to evading compulsory military service" (Schemm n.p.). One day ahead of this announcement, Amnesty International, in conjunction with other rights groups, demanded the launch of an independent investigation into Said's death (El Deeb n.p.).

Unsettled by the Interior Ministry's findings of the first autopsy, the Said Family appealed to the prosecutor general to request that Khaled's body be exhumed for a second autopsy. Once approved, the second autopsy would be slated to occur around June 15 ("Prosecutor General" n.p.). On this very date, the United States, via the State Department, issued a statement expressing concern over the cause of Said's death and urged Egypt to "hold accountable whoever is responsible" ("U.S. Urges Accountability" n.p.). Said's body was exhumed for its second autopsy on June 16, and the Interior Ministry did not reveal its accompanying results until one week later ("Khaled Saeid's Body Exhumed" n.p.; "Second Autopsy Report" n.p.).

In the interim, Said's uncle held a press conference at the Cairo Journalists' Syndicate where he rejected the Interior Ministry's allegations against Khaled as deception ("Khaled Saeid's Uncle" n.p.). The family emphasized this point by procuring a copy of Khaled's certificate of completion, proving the fulfillment of his mandatory military service (Ghonim 66). Family lawyer Mohamed Abdel-Aziz echoed state officials' lack of credibility when he told those gathered at the press conference that, "The interior ministry presented press statements which it imagined were defense evidence, but are in fact prosecution evidence. They are evidence of fabrication and lies" ("Khaled Saeid's Uncle" n.p.). On June 23, the Alexandria appeals public prosecution office held its own press conference to announce results of the second autopsy. Its preliminary report upheld the findings of the first autopsy, and stated that injuries on Said's body were the result of "contact with a solid object or objects" caused by "force used during the attempt to overpower the victim." It also claimed that these injuries were "light" and did not contribute to Said's death ("Second Autopsy Report" n.p.).

Once more human rights organizations responded, issuing statements pressing Egyptian authorities to re-consider taking more thorough actions related to the investigation of the Said case. On June 24, Human Rights Watch “cast doubt” on the autopsy and urged authorities to “question and charge the two plainclothes officers, along with the local prosecutor whose initial probe failed to interview eyewitnesses and gather proper evidence” (“HRW Urges Egypt” n.p.). Five days after announcement of the second autopsy’s results on June 28, the European Union Heads of Mission to Egypt “expressed concern” about the “circumstances” surrounding Said’s death. The EU statement went on to “welcome the declared readiness of the Egyptian authorities to conduct a judicial inquiry into this death and look forward to the inquiry being conducted impartially, transparently and swiftly in a way that will credibly resolve the discrepancies” (“EU Concerned” n.p.).

By June 30, the two police officers, identified as 33-year-old Awad Ismail Suleiman and 26-year-old Mahmoud Sabry Mahmoud, were held in custody for four days in connection with the beating death of Said. According to news reports, the two were held “on suspicion of having committed offences” as outlined by three separate articles of the Egyptian Penal Code. Both men denied the charges. The Said’s lawyer Abdel-Aziz, acting as their spokesman, indicated that the family was pleased the two were held in custody, but that the family would continue to press for the officers to be charged with “premeditated and intentional murder” (“Two Officers Remanded” n.p.). On July 4, it was announced that the two would remain in police custody until a trial date was set (“Policemen May Face” n.p.). Just four days later, the trial date was announced to begin

on July 27. By the date of this announcement, the WAAKS Facebook group had grown to about 200,000 members (“Egypt Court Sets” n.p.).

While the trial of the two officers began on July 27 in an Alexandria criminal court, it is recognized as a legal proceeding marked by one adjournment after another. The first pushed the trial to September 25, and, by late October, the trial is again adjourned to November 27 (Saleh, “Egyptian Policemen Go” n.p.; “Khaled Saeid Trial” n.p.). Just two days after this first adjournment, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder during a visit to Cairo made a statement about the case. In speaking to reporters, Holder expressed concern about the trial’s transparency, and hoped “that if there is liability to be found then those who were responsible for anything that is deemed to be inappropriate will be held accountable” (“U.S. Urges Accountability n.p.). As the September court date approached, more third-party pressure arose when the U.N. Human Rights Council Chief named Egypt, among other countries, as a nation where civil rights activists had been targeted and harassed (“UN Council Chief” n.p.). On November 27, one day ahead of a scheduled Egyptian parliamentary election, the trial was adjourned once more to December 25 (“Egypt President’s” n.p.; “Khaled Saeid Brutality” n.p.). The trial’s announced adjournments continue, putting the case on the Alexandria court’s docket well into the next calendar year.

On October 26, 2011, the two officers were eventually sentenced to seven years in prison and convicted of manslaughter (Afify n.p.). The punishment of the two as it is linked to police brutality is rare, as Egypt’s decades-long emergency law typically provides no accountability for victims at the hands of state police force (“Criminal Injustice” n.p.; Afify n.p.). The WAAKS Facebook group had grown immensely at this

point, increasing its membership from 220,000 in August 2010 to about 1.5 million members by the date of the officers' sentencing in 2011 (Eltahawy A13; Afify n.p.). The case eventually went through a re-trial, and the two officers were sentenced again in March 2014, this time to 10 years in prison for the 2010 death of Said ("2 Officers Sentenced" n.p.).

FORMATION OF THE MEDIA MESSAGE

News of Said's death at the hands of the two police officers came to the public's attention when social media sites Facebook and Twitter carried images of his disfigured body (Eltahawy n.p.). The dissemination of this imagery, in combination with the public's already heightened sensitivities to police brutality, established early the public's position surrounding this incident (Fahim and El-Naggar n.p.). As quickly as these photos appeared and without the provocation of any initial state response, Said was adopted by activists as a symbolic "martyr of the emergency law" (El Deeb n.p.). With the formation of the WAKS Facebook group, this viewpoint only intensified as its objective became, in part, to render accountability to Said's attackers (Zayan n.p.).

The interaction of state and public dialogue persists in this incident, as it will be seen that messages remain constant but gather intensity in response to opposing actions. This was set into motion with the June 12 Egyptian Interior Ministry statement announcing that Said's cause of death was asphyxiation caused by swallowing a bag of marijuana, along with the accompanying declaration that Said regularly used drugs. Said's depiction by the state as a criminal, was further bolstered by the police statement accusing him of prior convictions of theft, weapons possession and evasion of military service. The police statement went on to underscore that "the allegations reported by

some circles have intentionally ignored all the facts in order to show that the human rights situation in the country has been violated” (Schemm n.p.). Prior to the release of this Interior Ministry statement, Egyptian media had ignored and not reported on the beating death of Said. The then-anonymous administrator of the WAAKS Facebook group described Egyptian officials’ strategy, and what eventually become the media strategy, as simply “stain[ing] Khaled’s reputation” (Ghonim 64).

On June 13, independent newspaper *Nour’s Ghad* posted online an interview with the Internet café owner who gave an eyewitness account of Said’s attack in his business (Schemm n.p.). Additionally, Said’s mother interviewed with independent newspaper *Al-Shorouk*, sharing for the first time her suspicion that her son’s death was retribution for Khaled’s possessing the video of police (Ghonim 65). At this point, mere days after Said’s death, a Twitter hashtag in Said’s name appeared, and numerous Facebook users changed their profile photos to that of a picture of the young, living Khaled Said (Zayan n.p.). The state-run *Al-Gomhouria* daily newspaper retorted to the online activity by publishing a front page editorial condemning as “unpatriotic” those who had posted the pictures of a dead Said. The editorial went on to say that the photos of Said’s body were hardly proof of brutality, and then pointedly asked activists, “Do you hate Egypt that much?” Activists’ “instigations” only served to “tarnish Egypt and its human rights (record),” it read (Zayan n.p.).

After the Said Family’s request for a second autopsy, this reaction from the state replayed itself. This time *Al-Gomhouria* reprinted in its pages the June 12 Interior Ministry statement accusing Said of regular drug use (“Prosecutor General Approves” n.p.). By June 15, the Said Family took to Facebook, posting to the WAAKS page a

statement that confirmed Khaled had completed his mandatory military service, and that underscored that the Interior Ministry had failed to acknowledge the eyewitness accounts of Khaled's beating ("Police Crush Khaled" n.p.). Reinforcing this message ahead of the findings of the second autopsy, Khaled Said's uncle held a press conference at the Cairo Journalists' Syndicate on June 20 to refute once more the criminal accusations made against his nephew ("Khaled Saeid's Uncle" n.p.).

With the release of the second autopsy's preliminary report and the accompanying press conference announcing that Said's cause of death remained unchanged, the state media sustained its campaign of depicting Said as a criminal ("Second Autopsy" n.p.). State newspaper *Al-Gomhouria* repeatedly referred to Said as the "marijuana martyr" ("Said's Family Denies" n.p.). This designation of Said by the state also emerged on the WAAKS Facebook page in the form of posted comments. After some investigation, the page's administrator discovered it to be the handiwork of the NDP's Electronic Committee (Ghonim 69).

The results of the second autopsy served as a signal to members of the WAAKS group to organize more action against the Egyptian Interior Ministry and the results of the second botched autopsy. The Facebook page's administrator openly stated so in comments on the page ("Second Autopsy Report" n.p.). This prompted the NDP to take notice of the Facebook traffic, and through state newspapers, diminish the social networking sites credibility by referring to it as "owned by the CIA" and as a tool used by the state's enemies to "brainwash Egyptian youth" (Ghonim 74). On June 29, state media reported once more about Said's criminal behavior, stating this time that he had been

discharged during his military service, and had charges filed against him for drug possession and “military indiscipline” (“Saeid’s Family Denies” n.p.).

CONSTRUCTION OF NETWORKS & ORGANIZATIONS

As mentioned, outrage over the second autopsy’s unwavering findings compelled members of the WAAKS Facebook group to take action, spurring what news accounts regarded as the largest protest in connection with Said’s death (“Thousands of Egyptians” n.p.). On June 25, 2010, about 3,000 protestors in Alexandria gathered to demonstrate not only against the latest autopsy results, but also against police brutality (“Second Autopsy Report” n.p.; “Thousands of Egyptians” n.p.). This time, opposition leader Mohamed ElBaradei joined the protestors who had gathered outside of the Sidi Gaber Mosque despite the presence of riot police (“Hundreds Protest” n.p.; “Thousands of Egyptians” n.p.). Following the protest, ElBaradei said to reporters that the gathering was “a clear-cut message to the regime that the Egyptian people are sick and tired of practices that are inhumane. If they don’t get the message, then there is a problem with the regime; the writing is on the wall” (“Thousands of Egyptians” n.p.). Protestors who took part in the demonstration chanted slogans against Mubarak and the Egyptian Interior Minister. Police reaction at this protest differed greatly from that witnessed in the past, as it remained largely peaceful and without use of force (“Thousands of Egyptians” n.p.).

The WAAKS Facebook group planned another protest for July 9, shortly after the late July trial date was set for the two police officers charged in connection with Said’s death. With its group now numbering about 200,000 members, administrators of the Facebook page asked that members take part in silent protests across the country (“Egypt

Court Sets” n.p.). Specifically seeking a non-violent means to bring awareness to the cause, the page’s administrator referred to the event as a “Silent Stand of Prayer,” and created a Facebook event in this name to bring members out to the Alexandria Corniche, a stretch of road alongside the water (Ghonim 70-71). At this point in time, the WAAKS group’s membership was augmented by members of other opposition groups, including those backed by ElBaradei (“Online Protest” n.p.). As part of this “silent stand,” the WAAKS Facebook group members were asked to wear all black and stand quietly apart from one another at a specified location in cities throughout Egypt. The page administrator urged protestors not to gather in groups, as standing apart would not attract as much police attention. Standing quietly apart, after all, would not infringe on the emergency law’s restriction of small gatherings (“Online Protest” n.p.). Protestors were also encouraged to bring Bibles or Qur’ans to “read in peace” (Ghonim 70). While the Facebook page worked to build member participation and “confidence,” the page administrator also set out to attract media attention by crafting a press release designed to not only generate publicity but also reach out to “common Egyptians” not on Facebook (Ghonim 73). Published on the Facebook page itself and distributed on the streets by members in the form of invitations, the release generated a significant response (Ghonim 74).

Reuters reported that on the date of the Silent Stand, groups stood in silence along streets in Cairo; hundreds stood along the waterfront in Alexandria; and others gathered in the towns of Damietta and Tanta (“Online Protest” n.p.). According to another Reuters article, 8,000 people across the country had participated in this event initiated by the Facebook group (Ghonim 79). On the evening of July 9, WAAKS administrators posted

to the page every image received, and participants themselves posted their own pictures to the group's page (Ghonim 78, 79). One page member and protestor taking part in the Alexandria demonstration, took video footage from her car of those standing quietly apart along the cornice. The video shows participant after participant dressed in black, standing apart and lined up along the cornice (Ghonim 78).

The initial anonymous administrator of this Facebook page, who later revealed himself to be Google executive Wael Ghonim, employed a number of deliberate strategies when he initially created this group online in June 2010. In posting comments and articles to the page, he chose to address members by writing in first person to portray the "voice" of a deceased Khaled Said (Ghonim 61). By doing so, Ghonim said that it "had a greater impact on the page's members. It was as though Khaled Said was speaking from his grave" (61). Long before organizing Facebook events, Ghonim launched awareness campaigns that asked page members to change their profile photos to an image of Khaled Said (67). Ghonim stated that his ultimate goal for the page was to "mobilize" support, and he specifically detailed *how* he aimed to do so, saying that

The first phase was to convince people to join the page and read its posts. The second was to convince them to start interacting with the content by "liking" and commenting on it. The third was to get them to participate in the page's online campaigns and to contribute to its content themselves. The fourth and final phase would occur when people decided to take the activism onto the street. This was my ultimate aspiration (67-68).

Moving beyond the first few months after Said's death, the Facebook group continued to gain membership and maintain prominence. In November 2010, the Facebook group had roughly 330,000 members. This same month, and shortly before the Egyptian parliamentary election on November 28, the WAAKS Facebook group disappeared entirely off the Web for 15 hours ("Egypt Facebook Pages" n.p.). Although

not confirmed, page administrators surmised that Egyptian officials likely swamped the group's page with complaint messages, which Facebook's security protocols automatically interpret as spam and shut down the page. The Facebook page was now also equipped with an additional administrator based out of the United States, and she took immediate action to contact Facebook executives to re-instate the page (Saleh and Wahab 242). Stefano Hesse, Facebook head of communications for Europe, Middle East and Africa, said in a Reuters interview, "We have been working with political and human rights groups both inside and outside of Egypt since this was brought to our attention to explain the measures they need to take to keep their accounts and associated activity within the site rules" ("Egypt Facebook Pages" n.p.).

By 2011, the WAAKS page administrator collaborated in planning a January 25 Police Day event with many other opposition groups, to include activist Ahmed Maher (Ghonim 144). Two years prior, Maher and a friend had created a similar Facebook group in support of a textile workers' strike. As already demonstrated, Maher's experiences with Kefaya and the April 6 Youth Movement paved the way for this collaboration with WAAKS. This partnership would eventually go on to play a significant role in the 2011 uprisings.

Table 3.1 offers a summation of each Egyptian incident's three corresponding descriptive sections. Each incident is thus outlined here first by its characteristic agent interaction, which also develops to form the focus of eventual network formation. This is then followed by the state's media message, citizen/netizen message and, finally, the scenario's outcome. This framework sets the stage for the comparative analysis of all incidents present in Chapter 4.

Table 3.1 Framework for Egyptian Incidents

Incident	Agent Interaction/ Focus of Network Formation	Media Message	Citizen/Netizen Message	Outcome
May 25 Referendum Vote, 2005	Groups vs. State Officials	Participation as Patriotism	End of Mubarak's Rule	Re-election of Mubarak for Another Term
Textile Workers' Strike, 2008	Multiple Citizens vs. State Officials	Dismissal of Issues	Inflation/Regime Overthrow	Increased Salaries Nullified by Increased Prices, Taxes
Khaled Said, 2010	Single Individual vs. State Officials	Victim's Tarnished Image	Police Brutality/Regime Overthrow	Protracted Court Proceedings, 10-Year Sentences for Police Officers in 2014

IV. ANALYSIS

The *Integrative Conceptual Model of Internet Analysis* (ICMIA) presented in Chapter 1 made way for subsequent discussion in Chapter 2 of how these sub-fields of study overlapped. This area of intersection proceeded to reveal focus on the sustained presence of *public-media* interactions among these three sub-fields, and as they were applied to incidents in both Chapters 2 and 3. This research returns once more to the broad framework of the analysis model presented in Chapter 1.

The ICMIA served well to isolate the particular actors involved in Internet incidents, while also honing in on the dialogue generally presented by each. Focusing on public-media interactions also provided a solidified approach to deciphering the Internet's niche in scenarios that linked varying components of the public sphere. Through assessment of public-media interactions it could more readily be acknowledged how the Internet served to mediate the reactions of state officials, the reactions of citizens, and each party's subsequent actions. When taken comprehensively this dialogue can present the chaos of many voices, but this model took care to assign some order to this potential for noise.

While the ICMIA pinpointed which actors to focus on, its application revealed a departure from the anticipated type of relationships it might highlight. For example, expected findings in Chapter 1 stated that this research would uncover relationships between media and citizens that might pose a threat to the state.

Instead research uncovered that the most important and threatening relationships are those forged among citizens and that may translate to an ability to organize and mobilize. Another expected finding anticipated different types of interactivity that would take place between the media and citizens as mediated by the Internet. Analysis of the incidents in both countries yields the realization that interactivity is not necessarily a constant. In some incidents, interactivity did occur while in others there was little to be had, given that government discourse via the Internet was largely minimized.

The framework did, however, shed light on seeking answers to some of the related research questions presented in Chapter 1. Broadly, the notion of Web technologies influencing media reporting in authoritarian regimes was evidenced as having a variable effect, as China indicated the possibility of some influence while none seemed to exist in Egypt. Additionally, no relationship was found to exist between citizens and state media; instead, the significance of relationship building came via citizens' ability to form relationships with one another. This ultimately proved far more powerful in serving to threaten the state. Finally, this model did serve to highlight the differing ways ICTs were used to ultimately reach the same unifying objective of organizing either people or vitally important information that would publicly disclose corruption.

This model derives strength from its ability to succinctly capture the key messages that represent both the state's and the public's stance toward one another. Especially helpful is the fact that these key messages translate seamlessly to become the framing narratives of activists. This once again highlights the media's role in providing legitimacy to both the state and its citizens. While this model does provide insight into

online advocacy's effects on media, more broadly, it does not offer a way to gauge to what degree this Internet activity influenced the incident's real-world, offline outcome. Another potential drawback is the model's reliance on third party accounts in not only re-telling the incidents, but also correctly translating them to include the appropriate cultural nuances.

This model of Internet analysis stands to be more readily applicable to the years following 2010, as ICTs have evolved to allow more instantaneous and easily tracked online dialogue. While nothing specific precludes application of the model to a period prior to 2005, it is possible that the type of interaction analyzed here would be more fragmented due to being less well-documented. Research focusing on the May 25, 2005, referendum vote in Egypt offered this as a clue, since ICTs' capacity to spur real-time activity was only beginning then to be realized. This model would be especially insightful to apply to Egyptian and Chinese incidents after 2011. Differing perspectives may derive from post-2011 incidents in Egypt, as political transition might potentially reflect a marked difference in interactions between the media and the public. In China, the differences might be noted via the government's increasingly more stringent measures to control both Internet users and content. As might be expected, the model does, of course, bring with it the limitation of some parameters set by the existence of the Internet and ICTs themselves. Applying this model to other authoritarian regimes, at a most basic level, would rely on the presence of a population that employs use of these Web-based technologies.

With the Internet-mediated incidents of China and Egypt outlined in previous chapters, this research now turns to analysis of all six scenarios. The forthcoming areas of

analysis were noted as research was conducted, and they explore categories that encompass both the media and the public. This connects the analysis directly back to the media-public interaction highlighted in Chapter 2 as the unifying aspect of the ICMIA's differing fields of study.

SINGLE- VS. MULTI-ISSUE CITIZEN DISSENT

The Internet incidents presented in this research reflect a contrast in the number of issues Chinese and Egyptian citizens adapt into their representative online advocacy. Assessment of the Chinese incidents under review reveals that, despite a variance in cause, citizens' reaction stems singularly from government corruption. In the case of Deng Yujiao, for example, local government actors' behavior illustrates the state's degeneracy; while, in the incidents of the Sichuan earthquake and tainted milk formula, corruption is well-rooted in the procedural dealings of business entities inextricably linked to the government. As such, representative public opinion generated online focused solely on the governmental vice specific to each incident, and, though it may have pushed the boundaries of acceptable questioning of CCP authority, it stopped short of calling for complete reform of the central government. This finding aligns with some scholars' examination of the issues underlying Chinese Internet activism.

According to Lee, in China, "popular contention faces issue-specific opportunities," while "issues that directly challenge the legitimacy of the party-state are hardly ever tolerated" (9). The CCP's long-established precision of monitoring online discussions has served to create a pointed awareness in citizens of the state's clearly delineated "hierarchy" of permissibility (Lee 9). Subsequently, most citizens inherently know which topics are apt to elicit swift and direct government reaction, often in the form

of online censorship (Lee 9). Lin's assessment of Chinese online activism mirrors this, and points to the conclusion that citizens' voices gain more traction through a focus on a "specific problem" versus "general issues" (534). By doing so, citizens increase the probability of evading government suppression, while also maximizing the reach of their opinions by virtue of their remaining intact somewhere online (Lin 534).

In both the incidents of the Sichuan earthquake and the poisoned Sanlu milk formula, public opinion remains focused on government corruption, but also treads dangerously close to what the CCP deemed as "acceptable questioning." The fact that both scenarios affected a broader geographic region and thousands of citizens may very well account for this boundary pushing. While citizens did focus their initial outrage on local officials, the inaction at the provincial level inevitably prompted citizens to target the central government for their grievances. The Deng Yujiao incident also reflects this single-issue focus. Although citizens' reaction in this scenario did well to expand media attention beyond the province, citizens' not casting their disdain upon the central government may be attributed to the incident's largely localized nature.

Egypt, on the other hand, presents Internet scenarios in which activism openly targeted the regime, but also incorporated socio-economic and human rights issues with it. While this notion of openly challenging the NDP stands in sharp contrast to Chinese online activism, it also functions to create a unifying thread that links together each Egyptian incident in this research. Each highlights the fact that, despite citizens' focus on grievances of police brutality or inflation, public opinion always bridged back to the Mubarak regime as the source. While different Egyptian groups initiated the Internet activities behind each incident, the pervasive "master frame" of ending Mubarak's rule

endured, providing the cohesion needed to mobilize throughout the time frame presented in this research (Singerman 19). Kefaya's opposition began as a challenge to Mubarak's legitimacy and, after May 25, 2005, parlayed into highlighting repression at the hands of the NDP. Both the Mahalla textile workers' strike in 2008 and the beating death of Khaled Said in 2010 exemplified this too, as both the April 6 Youth and WAAKS identified the Mubarak regime as the originator and supporter of economic and social injustice. Firm establishment of this foundation for grievances, Singerman notes, would prove especially critical in what would go on to become the 2011 uprisings (19).

In describing what they refer to as Egypt's "Four Waves of Protest," Gunning and Zvi Baron confirm that each phase of grievances focused on specific, but multi-pronged, issues (33). The time frame of the second wave, designated as taking place from 2004 to 2006 and coinciding with the start of Egyptian incidents in this research, "constituted the first, direct, organized popular challenge against the Mubarak regime," encompassed the 2005 elections and constitutional amendments, and arched to economic and human rights grievances. The third wave, from 2006 to 2009, was characterized primarily by labor issues, but also maintained discourse that opposed the regime (Gunning and Zvi Baron 34). This accurately characterizes the issues encompassed by the April 6 Youth. Finally, the fourth wave, from 2010 to 2011, not only focused on another election year, but also "police brutality, economic hardship, and regime attempts to create sectarian tensions" (Gunning and Zvi Baron 34). By the 2011 Arab Spring, according to Gunning and Zvi Baron, this fourth wave had captured the well-established "networks and grievances from the previous three waves" (34). Each Egyptian Internet incident, therefore, coincides with

each protest phase and reflects that citizens' opposition online was just as multi-faceted as the activities intended for activists taking to the streets.

These phases of protest connect directly back to Egyptian Internet activism in that they not only highlight the multiple grievances existent in each incident, but also reflect how organizing online translated into street activism offline. The narratives of this multi-issue dissent had their origins in every day experiences, combined with the repressive rule of the NDP, developed behind the scenes via ICTs like blogs and Facebook pages, and became citizens' rallying cries in a number of protests. In short, these protest waves serve to echo the guidebook of grievances adopted by Egyptian activist groups in conjunction with the news event of each scenario.

EVIDENCE OF CITIZENS' DELIBERATE INTERNET STRATEGY

Prior to discussion of citizens' use of the Internet, it is important to examine first the type of agents whose interactions are critical to understanding both the incident itself and the eventual focus of network formation. Government officials are the one constant agent in all six incidents. However, citizens' representation manifests itself in varying agent forms. In the case of China, citizen representation is embodied in either a single individual or a conglomeration of multiple, independent individuals joined together by a common cause. It is important to note here that the loose affiliation of many single individuals in this country does not necessarily function as a unified group. While this is also true in Egypt, this country's agent interaction also includes citizen representation through established groups. This variety in the type of citizen agents in both countries does well to represent the gamut of potential agent interaction combinations. China's

notable lack of citizen representation through a group, and Egypt's inclusion of one, may well hint at the ability of the citizens within each country to form strong networks. This will be explored at greater length in a forthcoming section of this chapter.

The Chinese and Egyptian Internet incidents assessed disclose the fact that, in most all cases examined here, citizens who used ICTs to construct some form of a network, did so in a guided, strategic manner. Of the six outlined incidents, only that of China's Deng Yujiao lacks sufficient evidence to support this finding. This may be attributed to the news event's short time span before reaching resolution, or the fact that it remained contained at the local level within provincial boundaries. The remaining five incidents, both in China and Egypt, illustrate how specific activists or groups of activists used the Internet, albeit in different ways, to act upon available opportunities.

In both the Sanlu scandal and the collapsed schools of the Sichuan quake, documentation exists to support the fact that individual activists took the lead in culling a membership base in response to each incident's respective grievance. For example, Ai Weiwei's Citizen Investigation team united through Ai's blog, but, when it was censored by the CCP, the team released video footage, interview transcripts and its growing list of deceased children via Twitter and the blogs of other members. Similarly, Zhao Lianhai's website, created due to his own child's illness, resulted in not only a repository of medical information about affected children, but also connected families through the construction of a loose virtual network. Once united through this alliance, some family members then came together offline to represent their stance against governmental inertia.

While Chinese incidents reflect online activity driven by individual activists, the Internet strategies behind Egyptian incidents represent the activities of an organized group. Kefaya, the April 6 Youth and WAAKS also all engaged in planning that ultimately aimed to translate into mobilizing street activism. Kefaya's ongoing relationship with an established community of bloggers, its use of e-mail distribution lists to organize and its calculated placement of imagery, serve as examples of this. For the April 6 Youth, the group's online strategizing is evident in, among other ways, the creation of additional Facebook pages and sub-groups that held expressly different aims for membership and protest organizing. Finally, the marketing skills of the WAAKS page administrator were masterfully employed in the four-part approach that began with amassing membership and led to the ultimate goal of organizing on Egyptian streets.

Despite this commonality of deliberate planning strategies between Chinese and Egyptian incidents, the Internet activities of Egyptian groups reflect a far more well-developed capacity for network formation. This may result from the way each country's government responds to citizens' use of the Internet. The CCP acts quickly to eliminate online content that challenges the government, while the NDP's Electronic Committee maintains a relatively loose hold on Web content. Research shows that the NDP prefers to punish the individuals generating the content versus removal of the content itself (Faris n.p.). Seldom did retaliatory online activity by the NDP emerge as these Egyptian incidents unfolded. Given that the Mubarak regime largely dismissed these online activities as inconsequential, this lack of governmental response makes sense.

Nevertheless, it appears that Egyptian activist groups have capitalized from this sustained online presence, which allows activists the opportunity for more refined

planning. This same opportunity may not be afforded in China given the government's sophisticated mechanisms of control on Web content, in addition to well-established CCP organizations devoted wholly to policing real-time Web activity. Thus, the prompt removal of anti-government content thwarts any further potential for activists to strengthen online networks, thereby greatly diminishing the chance to engage in detailed planning for offline organizing.

CITIZEN REACTION AS INFLUENCING MEDIA AGENDA-SETTING

As seen in Chapters 2 and 3, once an incident takes place, citizens turned to different Internet platforms to voice their opinions online. Whether on websites, blogs, bulletin boards, or social networking sites, citizens' posting of opinions slowly carved its own niche in the conversation. Can this in any way influence the state-run media's reaction, and subsequently, its reporting? In China, research related to these incidents suggests that it is possible. Tang and Sampson, for example, cite the online public's opinion surrounding the sexual assault of Deng Yujiao as "sustaining the news agenda" (464). After citizens became familiar with the incident's basic facts, they reacted vehemently against Deng's attackers, which, in turn, prompted media to report on those reactions and view the case with heightened suspicion (Tang and Sampson 464). This type of interaction of "mutual feedback and momentum," maintained a steady focus on the case and yielded opinion headlines in newspapers like "Deng Yujiao case opens the era when everybody is a judge" (Tang and Sampson 465). Similarly, Siu's content analysis of newspapers and an Internet portal and bulletin board during the Sanlu scandal suggests that a correlation exists between online reaction and its influences on the media's reporting. This is especially true in the incident's latter phases, as citizens had

time to develop their opinions online and state media took subsequent steps to respond (Siu 379). In her research, Siu concludes that, “The [Internet] portal and the bulletin board should be regarded as another source that predicts topic salience and the coverage tone of traditional news media in terms of inter media agenda setting” (379).

This conception of online reaction as influencing media agenda-setting differs significantly with regard to Egyptian incidents. This can be attributed, first and foremost, to established periods of media repression like that evidenced during the 2008 El-Mahalla strikes. Since it can be seen here that state media implemented well-calculated measures to preclude reporters from covering the strikes, it seems a logical extension for media to refuse granting legitimacy to any activist groups supporting anti-government activities. This lack of netizens’ influence on reporting certainly also stems from the Egyptian government’s acknowledgment that media coverage of dissenting online public opinion would only serve to threaten the regime itself (Richter 19). As Richter notes, “The wider the reflection of the struggle between the different sides spreads, the less can the authoritarian regime deny the existence of other interests and perspectives and their needs to respond to them” (19). This coincides with the thoughts of a former national Egyptian TV anchor who said that “the national media performance was part of a plan to marginalize Egyptian people and [deceive] them into believing that the governing regime is the best they can get” (Sayed 278). Insight like this demonstrates clearly how no room exists in Egypt for the same type of state media agenda setting evident in China.

STATE MEDIA-MARKET TYPE

Discussion of media agenda-setting parlays here into a look at the operating environment of state media outlets and how their corresponding ownership may affect news content. Rugh's characterization of the Egyptian press during this time frame puts it squarely in the category of "mobilized press," which he describes as "the almost total subordination of the media system to the political system ... controlled by revolutionary governments" (Hafez 454). Despite the emergence of independent media outlets under the rule of Mubarak, the privatization of some newspapers, for example, still pits these owners against the well-established reporting restrictions put in place by the state (Kandil 40; Freedom House, "Egypt" 92). It also creates for independent media a reliance on the state for resources, like printing and distribution sources. Thus, the majority of Egyptian newspapers and periodicals are wholly government owned, permitting the state a singular role in not only censorship, but also regulation and patronage (Freedom House, "Egypt" 92). By extension, the state's funding of media secures advertising dollars, imparted almost solely from government-owned entities or ad agencies (Keenan 190). With obvious revenue at stake, Egyptian media would therefore be less inclined to upset the status quo of government support. This consequently explains why the Egyptian media would not embrace reporting about activist groups or their online activities.

This differs from China, whose news outlets are similarly government owned but lean more toward commercialization (Freedom House, "China" 78). Economic reforms introduced during the 1980s allowed the media as an industry to shift focus to business interests, a change from its sole function as state "mouthpiece" (Tang and Sampson 459). Subsequently, this signaled a shift in the media's revenue sources, with advertising

dollars from businesses now funding the majority of operations (Tang and Sampson 459; Freedom House, “China” 78).

These changes brought with them the capacity to influence the type of content appearing in Chinese print media. With advertising dollars now the primary source of income, this re-aligned content by moving it away from the party and instead toward the consumer (Freedom House, “China” 78). But, as Freedom House points out, it also created “economic incentives to reinforce political pressure and self-censorship, as publications fear the financial costs of being shut down ... as well as the loss of advertising revenue should they run afoul of powerful societal actors” (78). Apart from fiscal incentives, the emphasis on the consumer also caused media to assess its audience demographics. Hence, Chinese media realized for the first time that reporting on topics generating “audience appeal” might prove profitable (Tang and Sampson 459). While the state certainly continues to keep tight reins on its media, it has loosened its grip slightly with this realization. It is therefore under this pretext that reporting about Internet-mediated incidents has made its way into Chinese media, as these topics are now known to generate the buzz of added consumer interest.

Although close attention to Chinese incidents’ development may seemingly prove otherwise, this time period in China has also been regarded as one of relative transparency and openness. This is especially true after the Sichuan earthquake, as viewed against the backdrop of government reaction to previous year’s natural disasters or accidents. This loosening of media controls may potentially allow for reporting on public opinion as a way to detract from some criticism of the CCP. However, it also permits the state to claim greater freedoms in a venue that precludes the formation of

networks and potential mobilization. Certainly, this is not as true when content combines with the interactivity of citizens' reactions online since this undoubtedly leads to online public opinion as a foundation for network formation. As already evidenced, this poses too great a risk for the CCP, and thus makes way for the Chinese Internet's sophisticated system of control and regulation.

LEVEL OF GLOBAL ATTENTION ON STATE: CHINA'S 2008 BEIJING OLYMPICS

In 2001, long before the International Olympic Committee's decision to select Beijing for the 2008 Summer Olympics, China vowed it would allow free press and Internet access if it were to host the summer games ("IOC Reneges on Promise" n.p.). The country's maintained pledge of these freedoms, in fact, had played a singular role in the IOC's consideration of China as a contender to host. So committed was China to free access that in January 2007, the CCP issued media guidelines enabling free reporting on the Olympics and China itself (Guthrie n.p.). Through mid-July 2008 this promise was maintained by both China and the IOC, until July 30. That is the date the IOC announced that its joint "promise of Internet freedom" with China had been broken as CCP leaders permitted the censoring of select websites ("IOC Reneges on Promise" n.p.). Reporters at the Olympic Press Center had already encountered blocks on websites to include those of Amnesty International, Radio Free Asia, any sites related to Tibet and Taiwan and, for a time, the BBC website (Guthrie n.p.).

Although foreign press maintained a steady presence in China, the Beijing games would usher in an additional 20,000 journalists (Guthrie n.p.). As they began descending

on the capital city, it quickly became apparent that reporters would have to scale bureaucratic obstacles to perform their job duties. The state required broadcast journalists to hold permits, and, eventually negotiations arose when conflict erupted over access to Tiananmen Square. Two days of “closed-door meetings” yielded permission with enumerated restrictions on timing of live broadcasts, accompanying parties, and further instructions on obtaining additional permits (Guthrie n.p.). These “freer” restrictions required state re-adjustment once more when the quake struck and stories of poorly constructed schools emerged. This time the orders called for restrictions on the “range of topics” journalists would be allowed to cover (Guthrie n.p.).

The Beijing Olympic Games were to China like a lens set at its widest aperture, allowing the world an invitation to see this Eastern nation’s operations within its broadest, most revealing view. However, as Chinese officials soon discovered, this sweeping perspective brought with it the benefits of showcasing the country’s assets, but also the danger of displaying political fissures at their fullest. This is precisely what created such great discomfort for the CCP, especially in a year replete with both manmade and natural disasters. Jon Williams, BBC chief of news operations, described China’s nuanced stance on reporting by saying, “The image that gets around is that China is not open to foreign journalists. And it’s not true ... My experience is the Chinese are more open to us telling the world about China. They are less open to us telling China about the world. And they are actively suspicious about us telling China about China” (Guthrie n.p.).

Williams’ assessment explains perfectly the state’s incremental notes of progression and regression as they pertain to the media. Countless times, but especially

with regard to the Sanlu scandal and the Sichuan quake, the state attempted to positively promote itself, only to be forced to reorient its message when the spotlight shined too brightly on the same scenario's political insensitivities. In 2008, this is compounded by the fact that scores of foreign journalists in-country for the games stood ready to report on these very topics. In short, when the PRC detected it might be losing grip on the message intended for the media's agenda, leaders would mitigate the tension by issuing directives that tried to reset the agenda on a more palatable course. Thus, China's hosting of the 2008 Olympics is a critical piece of context in understanding the state's actions with regard to its media during these incidents.

GLOBAL ATTENTION ON STATE: EGYPT AS TARGET OF U.S.

DEMOCRATIZATION

During President George W. Bush's inaugural address in January 2005, he emphasized the paramount importance of imparting democratic processes to the institutions of nations marked by "tyranny." As such, Bush went on to state that, "to help young democracies succeed, we must help them build free institutions to fill the vacuum created by change" (Craner n.p.). The post-9/11 Bush administration had already ushered in an era focused on foreign policy aimed at political reform in Arab nations. The rationale then that cultivating democratization would weaken the seeds sown by terrorism and political instability, resurfaced once more in this president's second term (Oweidat et al. vii).

Egypt's standing as one of the largest countries in the Middle East, along with a history of mutually beneficial relations with the United States, made it a prime candidate

for these democratization efforts (Snider and Faris n.p.; Oweidat et al. vii). With the approach of the 2005 elections, Egypt found itself at the fore of “heavy domestic and international pressure to devise a more credible [electoral] system” (Hamzawy and Brown 2). This intensified with the cancellation of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s visit to Cairo as a result of the arrest of opposition candidate Ayman Nour in early 2005. In a June 20, 2005, speech at the American University in Cairo, Rice stated, “The Egyptian government must fulfill the promise it has made to its people — and to the entire world — by giving its citizens the freedom to choose” (Craner n.p.).

EXTERNAL THIRD- OR MULTI-PARTY PRESSURE ON STATE

Of the six incidents assessed, only two Egyptian incidents include significant involvement by an external party or multiple parties urging the state to respond in a specified way. This is most evident in the 2010 death of Khaled Said in which not only the United States issued statements, but also human rights groups and intergovernmental organizations followed suit. These statements acted to re-enforce demands on the Mubarak regime to bring justice to Said’s attackers. In total, the list of outside entities commenting on Said’s killing, autopsy, related court proceedings, or human rights abuses, generally, included more than six separate organizations. While it’s not entirely possible to gauge this pressure’s effects on online reaction, at a minimum it continued to keep the citizens’ message of police brutality at a fore.

The 2005 referendum vote also included in its timeline moments when an external entity exerted pressure on the NDP to act in a specific way, this time in the context of the electoral process. This third-party was the United States calling upon Egypt to conduct a fair and transparent vote, as evident in statements made by both the president of the

United States and U.S. officials. Ironically, the NDP did embrace aspects of this pressure; however, it quickly accommodated it in such a way that allowed it to be couched as progress toward an ultimately self-serving end. This is evident in the NDP's permitting opposition candidates on the ballot, only to have them meet up against insurmountable and unrealistic challenges to participate in the vote. The origins of this pressure on Egypt's NDP with regard to the May 25 referendum is best understood through the above outlined cause of international attention on the country. Another party, Human Rights Watch, also entered in criticizing Egypt, this time for NDP brutality against protestors on the day of the vote.

While external multi-party pressure is evident in at least these two Egyptian incidents, it is notably absent in all Chinese incidents assessed in this research. This kind of interference in Egypt may result primarily from the alliance forged between it and the United States. Given that during this time period the U.S. contributed nearly \$1 billion in aid to Egypt annually, this likely justified U.S. efforts to offer commentary on abuses of democratization and human rights in moments when American officials felt it most opportune (Oweidat et al. 4). This would not only create the perception of the U.S. furthering democratization efforts in the Middle East, but also create the appearance of continuously tethered relations between the two nations. Though closer scrutiny might reveal that these relations are not necessarily in sync with one another, in some ways the mere dialogue still managed to project the perception of a valued relationship. Meanwhile, the United States stood to benefit by securing an alliance with an oil-rich state that also allowed it access to geography of critical importance during previous military operations (Oweidat et al. 4).

The comparative analysis of these Chinese and Egyptian incidents reflects the possibilities and limitations ICTs can bring to citizens' discourse with the state. As made apparent here, the resultant outcome of an Internet incident is dependent not only on political factors as much as those influenced by social, cultural and technological capacities. Table 4.1 below offers a summation of the comparative analysis of Egyptian and Chinese Internet incidents, as framed by the six focus areas detailed above.

Table 4.1 Comparative Analysis of Internet Incidents, 2005-2010

		<i>China</i>	<i>Egypt</i>
	<i>Number of Issues as Presented by Citizens' Dissent</i>	Single	Multiple
PUBLIC	<i>Evidence of Deliberate Internet Strategy As Used by Citizens</i>	Yes	Yes
	<i>Citizens' Online Reaction as State Media Agenda-Setting</i>	Yes	No
	<i>State Media-Market Type</i>	Commercialized	Few Privatized
STATE / MEDIA	<i>Global Attention on State during Time Frame</i>	Yes, 2008	Yes, 2005
	<i>External Third- or Multi-Party Pressure on State</i>	No	Yes

CONCLUSIONS

Although this research initially set out to focus on relationships between citizens and media within their respective countries, assessment of the six incidents revealed that, as a whole, the most significant associations are those forged among a nation's citizens. The capacity to establish and build upon these connections ultimately translates into the foundation for the networks critical to social movement. Considered in conjunction with this was the Internet's ability to not only facilitate these connections with greater speed, but also allow for sustained two-way communication.

Especially striking is the pointed difference in network formation stemming from Internet-mediated incidents that took place in China versus those that occurred in Egypt during the specified timeframe. Chinese incidents examined here occurred independently of one another. Further, there was with no evidence of any substantial network transference or network overlap between these specified incidents. In the Egyptian incidents examined, the opposite appears to be true. Despite some questionable capacity to affect street organizing, each Egyptian incident held singular importance for its behind-the-scenes ability to incrementally strengthen its respective network. By 2010, this resulted in strengthened collective action that was gradually cultivated over the course of time and witnessed in the two previous incidents. With this in mind, it should be noted that the networks formed in conjunction with these three Egyptian cases set the stage for the networks underlying the 2011 uprisings.

The ruling parties' seizure of their respective press systems presents an obvious barrier to citizens gaining objective political information. Thus, this research also reflects

how citizens in authoritarian regimes adapt aspects of the public sphere to the resources available to them within their existing political environments. Despite the absence of democratic structure and agency, citizens in both the Chinese and Egyptian incidents maximize the utility of the Web's immediacy and reach to create an alternate space where some freer dialogue may take place.

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